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CHAPTER 10

THE FATIMID REVOLUTION (861-973) AND ITS AFTERMATH IN NORTH AFRICA*

THE END OF THE NINTH CENTURY AD

IN AD 861 the 'Abbasid Caliph Mutawakkil was murdered by the Turkish guard in the imperial capital of Samarra on the Tigris at the instigation of the heir to the throne, his son Muntaṣir. As heir to the throne, Muntaṣir had held the province of Egypt under the system in force since the accession of Mu'taṣim in 834. Under this system, the *wālī* or governor had been appointed not by the caliph, but by some high officer or prince at court to whom the province was assigned. In 856 Muntaṣir had appointed one Yazīd b. 'Abd Allah from the Turks who were the *corps d'élite* of the army in Iraq, the first Turk to hold the position in Egypt. Yazīd remained in office for about ten years, but his power was limited by the separation of Alexandria and Barce (Barca) in Cyrenaica from the government at the Egyptian capital of Fuṣṭāṭ, as well as by the independent appointment of the *'āmil*, the financial superintendent, who was responsible for the collection of revenue and the remittance of an annual *māl*, literally 'wealth', to the treasury at Samarra. Thus divided, the government of Egypt was comparatively weak, and the far south had been abandoned to Arab tribes around Aswan. Revenue accruing to the state seems also to have fallen. Much of the land was in the possession of men like Muntaṣir, aristocrats who may not even have lived in the country. Much of the remainder was progressively alienated to tax-farmers charged with the task of attracting peasants back on to land which had gone out of cultivation. The Copts who formed the bulk of the population seem to have fled from the harsh fiscal regime of the state in search of new masters. The Muslim population, including the beduin tribes and the army, was susceptible to agitation on behalf of Shi'ite pretenders. Even before the death of Mutawakkil, Yazīd was hunting out *rawāfiḍ*, 'Shi'ite heretics', and sending them to Iraq.

* Events in Egypt after AD 973 are covered in Vol. 3, ch. 2. For maps, see pp. 498, 508 and 519 of ch. 8 of this volume. [Ed.]

There may have been an attempt at reform or greater efficiency. In 861, the year of Mutawakkil's murder, Ibn Mudabbir was transferred from Syria to Egypt as *'āmil*. Ibn Mudabbir has a bad reputation; for al-Maqrīzī in the fifteenth century, he was one of those 'cunning devils of scribes' who had always oppressed the people with unjust taxes despite the efforts of a few enlightened rulers to bring the fiscal system into line with the Islamic Law.¹ He it was who had made the mining of natron into a state monopoly, and introduced the taxes known as *mukūr*. He was thus a prime example of that indifference to the true welfare of the country which had characterized the government since the Muslim conquest, and caused its revenue to fall from twenty million dinars under the Romans to something of the order of three or four million.² Al-Maqrīzī seems to be developing the argument of the late-ninth-century traveller al-Ya'qūbī, who asserted that the revenue had fallen from fourteen million dinars under 'Amr b. al-Āṣ to no more than three million as the result of the conversion of the population to Islam.³ These statements apparently justify the opinion of Becker that in the course of the Middle Ages Egypt experienced a long decline from classical prosperity (see chapter 8, pp. 514-15, 535-6). But both are unreliable, if only because the initial figure is far too high. So far as Ibn Mudabbir is concerned, the view of al-Maqrīzī might suggest that he was a person of some prominence in the Egyptian tradition, with some claim to be considered an architect of the medieval fiscal system.

If Ibn Mudabbir's achievements were more than legendary, however, they are obscured by political events. In the decade following the murder of Mutawakkil, four caliphs came and went, made and unmade by the Turkish guard. It was the occasion for more widespread instability, not least at the popular level. Dissaffection – social, political and religious – had been endemic in the empire since the seventh century, partly because of the exclusive nature of successive regimes. Over the years it had been increasingly focused by an historic cause, the claim of the descendants of the fourth caliph, 'Alī, to the imamate, the leadership of the Muslim community held by the caliph in his capacity as the deputy of Muḥammad. About 862, one such descendant, Abū Ḥadarī, who had gathered a following of some kind, was arrested by Yazīd and dispatched to Iraq, and an order was received from Samarra

¹ al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa 'l-I'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṣaṣ wa 'l-āthār* [*Khiṣaṣ*], ed. by G. Wiet (Cairo, 1911), II, 81.

² *Ibid.* II, 69.

³ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892), 339; French trans. by G. Wiet, *Le Livre des pays* (Cairo, 1937), 197-8.

prohibiting any 'Alawī or member of the family of 'Alī from owning an estate, riding a horse, travelling outside Fustāt, or possessing more than one slave. The specifications reveal how a rebellion might be organized by an ambitious nobleman. In 864 six more 'Alawīs were deported. But the rebellion which broke out in 866 presents the familiar spectacle of a revolt of the Arab tribes and the army, which proclaimed an 'Alawī only after its first success.

The revolt was begun by one Jābir b. al-Walīd among the Arabs of the western Ḥawf, the border of the desert in the region of Alexandria, from whom it extended to the Christians (*ṣulbiyya*) and the *mawālī*. These were troops. Of the leaders mentioned by al-Kindī alongside Jābir of the Banū Mudlij, one is Jurbaj al-Naṣrānī *al-Ḥāris*, 'the Christian, the guardsman', one of the very worst of the Nazarenes. A Christian militia, almost certainly of foreign, most probably Byzantine, origin, is indicated. The *mawālī* would also be soldiers, but from a different part of the world. A second leader is 'Abd Allah al-Marīsī, 'the southern Egyptian', a term used by the contemporary al-Ya'qūbī for the Copts of Upper Egypt. But from the time of al-Mas'ūdī in the tenth century, the term was used for the Nubian population of the valley beyond Aswan.¹ It is likely that the Muslim 'Abd Allah of al-Kindī's tenth-century reference is to be compared with the last leader to be mentioned, Abū Harmala al-Nūbī, 'the Nubian', 'a terrible man'. Together they would represent a body of 'Sudanese' soldiery, quite in keeping with the practice of the time, which throughout the Muslim world was to form units of particular ethnic origins often out of imported slaves. The revolt quickly spread across the northern Delta, where the rebels attempted to levy taxes in a manner which recalls the independence of this distinct region earlier in the century during the great civil war on the death of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. The Turkish garrison at Fustāt was defeated, an 'Alawite, one Ibn al-Arquṭ, was proclaimed, Yazīd was recalled, and the rebellion put down only with the arrival of fresh Turkish troops from Iraq. These, the '*abid*' or 'slave troops' par excellence of the Muslim world (see chapter 8, pp. 528-9), were the critical factor in the composition of the army. The caliph depended upon them, but their privileges provoked the jealousy of other units.

The rebellion was suppressed in 867. Meanwhile responsibility for the government of Egypt had fallen to one Bāyakkbak, a high Turkish officer at Samarra, who in 868 appointed another Turkish officer,

¹ al-Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies d'or* (*Murāj al-dhahab*), text and trans. by C. Barbier de Meynard and P. de Courteille (Paris, 1864), III, 32.

Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, to Fustāt. The circumstances are obscured by retrospective accounts. On his arrival, it is said, he was greeted by the two officials whose power acted as a check upon the *wālī* – namely Shukayr, the *ṣāhib al-barīd*, the ‘postmaster’, and Ibn Mudabbir, the ‘*āmil*’, the latter with a gift of 10,000 dinars or gold coins, and an escort of 100 *ghilmān* or ‘pages’. Ibn Ṭūlūn is said, in memorable fashion, to have refused the gold and to have taken the escort instead. This prompted a report to Samarra that he was not interested in money, only soldiers, and was evidently seeking independence. A letter to this effect, written by Ibn Mudabbir, was returned from Samarra to Ibn Ṭūlūn, who imprisoned the ‘*āmil*’ several times, only to be obliged on each occasion to allow him to return to his duties. The story is symbolic, an epitome for the reality. Ibn Ṭūlūn’s immediate task was to deal with a revival of the revolt of Jābir in the west under a second ‘Alawite pretender. When the rebel had been killed in the south in 869, yet a third pretender appeared in Upper Egypt with the significant name of Ibn al-Ṣūfī. Whatever his claim to ‘Alawite descent, his name and his actions seem to show him as a zealot in the popular tradition of the preacher and the holy man, claiming divine inspiration for an attack on the ungodly. The town of Asna was sacked, and its people, who may have been mainly Christian, massacred; the commander sent against Ibn al-Ṣūfī by Ibn Ṭūlūn was mutilated and crucified. Early in 870 Ibn al-Ṣūfī was defeated at Akhmim, and driven out to the Wāḥāt, the oases of Kharga and Dakhla. But already events in Egypt were overshadowed by events in Iraq.

Bāyakkak was murdered, to be succeeded so far as Egypt was concerned by Yārjūkh, the father-in-law of Ibn Ṭūlūn, whose appointment was naturally confirmed. However, while Ibn al-Ṣūfī was expelled from Egypt, in 869 a similar pretender in Iraq began the revolt of the Zanj. The Zanj were mainly black slaves, mostly from the eastern side of Africa, who worked on the salt flats at the mouth of the Euphrates. Within a year their movement controlled the southern part of the country, and the government itself was in danger. Perhaps in consequence, early in 870 the governor of Palestine revolted, seizing Damascus, and confiscating the annual ‘wealth’ of Egypt on its way to Samarra. Ibn Ṭūlūn went out against him with ‘the blacks’ and others, possibly ‘Greeks’. The force retired, but its composition is strongly reminiscent of the rebels of 866/7, and suggests that the new governor had begun to build up his forces with troops who could be recruited directly into Egypt. Later in the year work began just to the north of

Fustāt upon a site chosen for a palace city, to be called al-Qaṭā'i', 'the Wards' or 'Quarters'. It was a major move from the position of a simple *wālī* or governor towards that of a *sulṭān* or monarch after the fashion of the caliph himself. In 871 the authority of Ibn Ṭūlūn was formally increased when Alexandria and Barce were added to his command; it was perhaps the year when the 'āmil Ibn Mudabbir was withdrawn, and Ibn Ṭūlūn was appointed to the *kharāj*, the collection of revenue. The accumulation of power was complete in 872 when Yārjūkh died at Samarra and was only nominally replaced by Muwaffad, the young son of the caliph. Under the strain of the Zanj war, the system inaugurated by Ma'mūn and Mu'taṣim some fifty years earlier had broken down, and, after a long period of relative insignificance, Egypt was at last following Ifrīqiya, under the Aghlabid dynasty, towards independence.

It was a lesser rather than a greater Egypt. The region of Aswan was under the control of one al-'Umarī,¹ who in 872 defeated the pretender Ibn al-Ṣūfī when he launched an attack from the western oases, and drove him across the Red Sea to Mecca. Al-'Umarī had a hand in the gold-mines of the Wadi Allaḡi as well as in the traffic of the Nile Valley between Egypt and Nubia. He may have acted as an agent, helping to supply Ibn Ṭūlūn with the *sūdān*, the 'blacks' he required for his growing regiments of 'abid. Many if not most of these *sūdān*, however, may have come not from Nubia but from the central Sudan via Zawila in the Fezzan, the most probable source of slaves for the equally novel black army of Ibn Ṭūlūn's energetic Ifrīqiyān contemporary, the Aghlabid Ibrāhīm II. Their recruitment is the first sign of the wealth now being concentrated in the hands of the ruler of Egypt instead of sent as tribute or rent to Iraq.² This was evidently sufficient to maintain the much larger army, as well as to complete the building of al-Qaṭā'i'; the laying out of the *maydān*, the open space to the east; the construction of a *bimāristān* or hospital; and finally the erection of the great Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, begun in 876, it is said, because the people complained that the presence of the troops in attendance on their master at the Friday prayer in the old Mosque of 'Amr made the building too

¹ For the career of this al-'Umarī, see also ch. 9, pp. 578-82., and also vol. 3, p. 72.

² Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 62-3: the revenue rose from 800,000 dinars a year to 4,300,000, giving Ibn Ṭūlūn the distinction of being, along with the Umayyad 'āmil 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Ḥabbāb, one of the only two administrators who raised the revenue to any extent after its initial fall below 3,000,000 dinars a year. The statement serves Maqrīzī's polemical purpose, and is not to be taken literally; but a considerable increase in revenue at the disposal of the *sulṭān* is plausible on the assumption that Ibn Ṭūlūn had come to enjoy the rents of the great estates as well as the product of taxation. Al-Maqrīzī refers to such a combination of income in connection with the Ikshidids, *ibid.* II, 65.

crowded. The expenditure was probably beneficial. The demand for gold attested by the state monopoly imposed upon the robbing of ancient tombs, as well as the mining activity noted by al-Ya'qūbī in the Wadi Allaqi, may reflect an increase in cash payments. More generally the expenditure almost certainly increased the import of a wide range of commodities, including slaves, against the export of Egyptian grain and cloth.

While Egypt was coming to independence at the hands of one of the new Turkish nobles of the empire, against a background of popular revolt, Ifriqiya illustrated an apparently different path to power. In 875 the *fuqahā'* of Kairouan are said to have recognized the virtues of Ibrāhīm, the elder brother of the *amīr* who had just died, and to have devised a *ḥīla*, a dispensation, to enable him to ascend the throne instead of the infant nephew to whom he had sworn allegiance. This would have been a fitting climax to a period of some twenty-five years since the appointment of the great jurist Saḥnūn as Qāḍī of Ifriqiya, when the Aghlabid rulers had lived by the Law, and the country had been in consequence peaceful and prosperous.¹ This golden age, however, must be seen for what it is, a legend which forms the opening section of a dramatic narrative constructed on a regular pattern. The view of early Muslim history as the restoration of the practice of the Prophet after an interval in which it had been threatened by the unfaithfulness of the rulers, was a vision of moral excellence leading through moral failure to moral regeneration which was available to historians of subsequent periods. The latter part of the reign of Muḥammad I, and those of the pious prince Abū Ibrāhīm Aḥmad (856-63), who provided the city of Kairouan with a reservoir and completed the Great Mosque, Ziyādat Allah II (863-4), and Muḥammad II (864-75) provide a comparable starting-point for a similar story.

Abū Ibrāhīm Aḥmad may well have been pious. The dynasty had pursued an actively Muslim policy in Sicily, where the jihad was still carried on in annual expeditions. It is clear that the '*ulamā'*' were influential in the main towns, and that it was politic to win their approval by the appointment of a *qāḍī* from their ranks. In virtue of his office, the Qāḍī of Ifriqiya was a statesman and a politician. At the same time, the *amīr* was able to manage a difficult person such as Saḥnūn by appointing a more pliant colleague to handle the bulk of the work. This colleague might belong to a different *madhhab*. Even without

¹ For this picture, cf. M. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide, 184-296/800-909: histoire politique* (Paris, 1966), 250-6, 258-60, 265-73.

doctrinal differences, however, the Muslim community was split up. Justice was largely local. Power was extensively delegated. The lords of the *jund* in the north and west were semi-independent. Tribal peoples governed themselves, often beyond the reach of the *sulṭān* and his representatives on their forays. In consequence, the affairs of the capital were fundamentally parochial. When in the middle of the ninth century they dominate the story, so that the other cities, still less the outlying districts, are scarcely mentioned, it says something for the regime. The twenty-five years of peace might be construed as twenty-five years of comparative neglect. The only recorded activity to east and west is a punitive expedition against the Berbers of Tripolitania in 859, and another under Muḥammad II which came to grief against the peoples of the Aures mountains and the Zab. In these circumstances, the accession of Ibrāhīm II looks more simply like a well-laid plot.

Despite the common theme of a world in Muslim hands, particularism is the impression left by contemporary writers, to whom the future was naturally unknown. The accounts of the Arab conquests, written down in the *Futūḥ*, the 'conquests' literature, told a tale of Islam as the climax of world history while its achievements on the ground were being plotted. Writers like Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam in Egypt went on to describe the conquered localities in the beginning of the *Khiṭaṭ*, the 'places' literature. From the second half of the ninth century such descriptions were contained in general geographical accounts of the countries, towns and itineraries of the *Dār al-Islām*. From the traveller al-Ya'qūbī comes much of our knowledge of the diversity and the political fragmentation of the Maghrib at this time. The fragmentation, on the other hand, was the counterpart of economic unification. The Ibadites of Tahert (Tiaret), the Djerid and the Jebel Nefusa were developing the routes across the Sahara through Zawila to the central Sudan and through Ghadames and Wargla to the Niger bend; their trade extended into Egypt, Ifrīqiya and Spain. If the trans-Saharan connections of Sijilmasa in the Tafilēt, Tāmdult in the valley of the Dar'a and Igli in the valley of the Sous are less certain (see chapter 8, pp. 553-4), this region to the south of the High Atlas was important in its own right as a producer of silver and copper;¹ the developing of mining, for silver, copper, iron and lead, in Ifrīqiya as well as in Morocco, was indeed one of the revolutionary features of the early Muslim period.² From Massa,

¹ Cf. B. Rosenberger, 'Tāmdult: cité minière et caravanière', *Hespéris Tamuda*, 1970, 11, 104-39.

² Cf. M. Lombard, *Les Métaux dans l'ancien monde du V^e au XI^e siècle* (Paris and the Hague, 1974), 159-62, 180-95, 235-6.

the *ribāt* which was the port of the Sous, it would seem that ships sailed to the Mediterranean, where they contributed to the international traffic of the Old World. Of this al-Ya'qūbī and his contemporary Ibn Khurdādhbih provide a glimpse, including merchants ranging as far as China. The market economy as a whole was growing, with corn, fruit, olive-oil, vegetables, cotton, flax and animals produced for sale sometimes over distances of hundreds of kilometres. Cloth was commercially the most important manufacture, but only one of a vast range of arts and crafts. Many of these went into building, which came into its own in mosques, palaces, fortifications and reservoirs.

Egypt derived a characteristic benefit from the continuation of the Zanj war as it diverted the trade of the Indian Ocean from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. The war had a crippling effect on the revenues of the caliphate, and according to tradition it was a question of money – the size of the much-reduced tribute paid by Ibn Ṭūlūn to Samarra and its recipient, the caliph Mu'tamid or his powerful brother Muwaffaq – which in 877 led to open conflict. While Mu'tamid bestowed upon Ibn Ṭūlūn the *thughūr*, 'the marches' (the region of Cilicia with its capital at Tarsus which formed the military frontier between Syria and the Byzantine empire), Muwaffaq, the effective head of government, attempted to depose him, entrusting to one Mūsā b. Bughā the task of installing Amājūr, the governor of Damascus, at Fustāt. But Mūsā remained throughout the year at Raqqa on the Euphrates, until his troops deserted and both he and Amājūr died. In 878 Ibn Ṭūlūn marched through Syria to Cilicia, meeting little resistance. He retired to Egypt at the news of the revolt of his son 'Abbās, whom he had left as regent at Fustāt. 'Abbās fled with his men to Tripoli, where they were beaten by the Aghlabids, then back to Barce, where he eventually surrendered to his father in 881. Syria however remained loyal until in 882 the *ghulām* Lu'lu', a slave of Ibn Ṭūlūn's personal guard sent to Damascus at the head of an army, deserted to Muwaffaq. Ibn Ṭūlūn himself advanced into Syria, where it is said the Caliph Mu'tamid himself tried to reach him in an attempt to escape from his brother the *wazīr*. At Damascus, Ibn Ṭūlūn summoned the *fuqabā'* of Egypt and Syria to declare that Muwaffaq had forfeited his claim to obedience and ought to be deposed.

In this way the master of Egypt found himself not very differently placed from the ruler of Ifriqiya, seeking the approval of the Law for his actions. The approval was given, although not apparently by the virtuous Qāḍī of Egypt, Bakkār b. Qutayba, who was imprisoned for

his refusal. For this, it is said, Ibn Ṭūlūn died penitent, returning from Cilicia to expire at Fustāṭ early in 884. In the sources he enjoys a good reputation, but here too hindsight has been at work. The sins of the father have been visited on his second son, his successor Khumārawayh, whose wicked indulgence has become the explanation of, and the justification for, the ultimate extinction of the upstart dynasty. Muwaffaq had put down the Zanj in 883, but was unable to dislodge the young man either from Egypt or from Syria. In 886 he recognized his independence for thirty years in return for a modest tribute. After the death of Muwaffaq in 891 and that of Mu'tamid in 892, the pact was sealed by the fabulous marriage of Khumārawayh to the daughter of the new caliph, Mu'taḍid. Where his father had built a mosque, however, Khumārawayh built a sumptuous palace adorned with life-size statues of the royal family, paintings and reliefs, and equipped with a bed floating in a pool of mercury brought, presumably by sea, from Spain. When in 896 he was murdered at Damascus by members of his household, a voice was heard at the funeral quoting from the Koran: 'seize him and cast him into the Fire'.¹ The end of the Tulunids was at hand, though not for any real fault. The unpopularity of Jaysh, the elder son of Khumārawayh, led to his murder by an uncle. Characteristically, however, the army preferred the direct line, and installed a second son, Hārūn. The regime was sustained by virtue of this loyalty, although the caliph was able to exploit the crisis and revise the pact made with Khumārawayh. In 899 he regained control of Cilicia, and raised the tribute of Egypt to 450,000 dinars a year.

As in Egypt, so in Ifrīqiya. Ibrāhīm II turned from a virtuous prince into a monster. He has the character of an Ivan the Terrible, as a friend of the people driven by the plots of the aristocracy to abhorrent cruelty. On the one hand he dispenses justice; on the other hand he slays. In 878 it is the *mawālī* of his predecessor whom he exterminates, presumably *ṣaqālība* or troops of European origin whom he replaces with *sūdān*, 'blacks', in the new palace city of Raqqāda which he builds to the south of Kairouan. In 893 it is the turn of his *fityān*, the 'pages' or *ghilmān* in training, to be his bodyguard and men of trust, followed by the Arabs of the *jund* at Balazma to the west. His own family is not safe. The revolt of Tunis and the leaders of the north confines him briefly to his new stronghold, but this is stamped out in 894. In 896 he goes through the Jebel Nefusa to Tripoli, where his cousin and potential rival, Muḥammad, is put to death. He advances to the Egyptian frontier at

¹ Cf. P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 7th edn (London and New York, 1960), 454-5.

Ajdābiya, where he orders the heads of fifteen victims to be cooked and brought to table. It may be that he suffered from melancholia;¹ it may be, again, that insanity drove him to weaken though not to destroy the civil and military aristocracy which dominated the society and the politics of the country. However savage the means, on the other hand, the intention was probably deliberate, to rectify the weakness of the central government by increasing the size of the army. To the west was the spectacle of Andalus, where in the second half of the century the country fell into the power of local lords like those of Ifriqiya, and the Umayyads barely survived. To the east was the example of Ibn Ṭūlūn, whose son had attacked Tripoli in 880. Heavier contributions to pay for the troops may have provoked the opposition which made them necessary. The great revolt of 893/4, comparable in character, scale and effect to that of al-Ṭunbudhī in 824/5, doubtless confirmed Ibrāhīm in his judgement, while the final justification may have been the support given by the 'Abbasid Caliph Mu'taḍid to Ibrāhīm's cousin Muḥammad at Tripoli.

It is certainly the history of the east which explains the form of the story. As the 'Abbasids, now back in Baghdad, prepared for the reconquest of Egypt, they seem to have envisaged some assertion of their suzerainty over Ifriqiya. Early in 902 an embassy came from Iraq to Ibrāhīm. Later in the year the *amīr* handed over the government of Ifriqiya to his son 'Abd Allah II and embarked for the war in Sicily. For twenty years after the fall of Syracuse in 878, the Muslim effort in the island had flagged. It was renewed when 'Abd Allah led a preliminary expedition in 900/1. Ibrāhīm commanded a strong force, and proceeded to complete the conquest with the storming of the Byzantine capital of Taormina. In the autumn he died at the siege of Cosenza on the mainland. It was an edifying end. Ostensibly he had laid down his life in battle against the infidel, having first laid down the power he had so grossly abused at the behest of his rightful lord. Whatever the truth, it was an auspicious beginning to the restoration of justice to the world, the completion of which was to be the return of Egypt to the lawful authority of the caliph. It is therefore ironic that the fall of Egypt was precipitated by a second revolutionary movement in the Fertile Crescent, and that in Ifriqiya it was not the 'Abbasids who reaped the honour of the affair. Instead, the vices of Ibrāhīm went to justify the triumph of an enemy, whose campaign, building to a head, entirely overthrew the Aghlabids.²

¹ For the list of atrocities and this diagnosis, cf. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide*, 304-18.

² The origin of the tradition hostile to Khumārawayh and his successors is clear from the

In the aftermath of the Zanj war in Iraq, the long tradition of rebellion in the name of 'Alī and his descendants was concentrated by the Ismā'īlī sect. The majority of Shi'ites, those who followed the family, had come to consider that the headship of the house descended in the direct line of Ḥusayn, 'Alī's second son. As they came to accept the authority of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the great-grandson of Ḥusayn, for their legal doctrine, however, so they converted into an article of faith their support for the claim of these *imāms* to be the true rulers of the Muslim community. The conversion was complete when the direct line came to a mysterious end in 878, and the twelfth and last head of the house became a figure destined to reappear at the end of the world. A minority, on the other hand, preferred to consider Ismā'il, the son of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth *imām*, whom his father was said to have excluded from the succession, as the seventh and last *imām*. He too had disappeared, but his return, by contrast, was imminent. The doctrine of the Isma'ilites, therefore, was revolutionary in the way that the Messianism of the 'Abbasid *dawla* had once been. They employed the technique of the secret society to prepare the way for the Mahdī, 'the rightly-guided one', the precursor of the Qā'im, 'the bringer of the Resurrection', the *imām* himself. About 890, one Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ set up in Iraq a *Dār al-Hijra*, a 'place of emigration', to compare not so much with the

'Abbasid poetry which celebrated the end of the regime (see p. 601, n. 2). In the same way in Ifriqiya, the victorious Fatimids were responsible for the tale of the Aghlabids which has come down to us through the lost chronicle of the eleventh-century Zīrid historian al-Raḥīq; cf. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide*, 308-9. In the case of Ibrāhīm II, who died before the Fatimid campaign came into the open, there is evidence of a previous story distorted to deny that there was any virtue in his expedition to Sicily (cf. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Kitāb al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa'l-Maghrib*, ed. by G. S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal, 1 [Leiden, 1948], 131-2, 133; French trans. by E. Fagnan, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord et de l'Espagne intitulée Al-Bayano 'l-Moghrib* [Algiers, 1901], 176, 178; Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide*, 320); the 'year of justice', when Ibrāhīm remitted the taxes before his departure, was called by the people the 'year of injustice'. The original tale of pious preparation whose existence is revealed by this anecdote may have stood alone. That it was meant in fact to stand in contrast to the story of Ibrāhīm's wickedness as evidence of his penitence may appear from the statement in the *Bayān*, 1, 131, that the remission of taxes was an act of expiation prompted by the inexorable progress of the *dā'i* among the Kutāma. The original of *this* statement, which forms part of the Fatimid gloss, is perhaps to be found in the assertion by two fourteenth-century authors, al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Khaldūn, that Ibrāhīm was deposed for his sins by the 'Abbasid caliph (cf. Talbi, *L'Émirat Aghlabide*, 318). This detail, found only in these two late sources, nevertheless agrees with the kind of construction put upon the history of the Tulunids by Baghdad. It may indicate an attempt to make capital out of events in the west as part of the campaign to recover Egypt. Given the obscurity of the activities of the Fatimid agent Abū 'Abd Allah in the Maghrib at this time (see pp. 600-1), there is no need to think, with Talbi (*L'Émirat Aghlabide*, 319-20), in terms of an actual attempt to deal with a threat of revolution which only later became apparent. It seems more likely that the story of Ibrāhīm, the 'penitent tyrant', was in origin a fiction of the previous phase of politics in the 'Abbasid empire.

old *amṣār* as with Medina, the place to which the Prophet had 'emigrated' to establish Islam. This became the centre of a new community, a society of initiates known as the Qarmaṭiya, the Carmathians, whose scattered cells worked in hiding against the 'Abbasid regime. At the same time, the coming of the Mahdi in the person of one Sa'id b. Ḥusayn was being preached clandestinely by his *du'āt* (sing. *dā'i*), literally 'the callers', from his headquarters in Syria. These achieved their first overt success in the Yemen, but from there the *dā'i* Abū 'Abd Allah went to Ifriqiya about 893.

Abū 'Abd Allah established himself among the Kutāma Berbers of the Little Kabyle mountains in the north-west of Ifriqiya, an area dominated by the lords of the *jund* in their citadels, notably those at Mila and Setif. On the model of Muḥammad at Mecca and Medina, he is said first to have settled down as a teacher at the village of Ikjān, and then to have made a *hijra*, an emigration leading his followers to the village of Tāzrūt. This story of the re-enactment of the beginning of Islam in accordance with the accepted version, however, is suspect, coming as it does from an Isma'ilite source concerned to present the triumph of the Isma'ilite *da'wa*, or 'calling', as the triumph of the true faith in accordance with the Scriptures.¹ It is likely that the *dā'i* was in the tradition of the popular preacher, demanding the destruction of a great abomination before the coming of the Lord. What was of fundamental importance was that his appeal was directed in the first instance, not to the world at large, nor yet to the Ifriqiyān rebels of 893/4, but to a particular people on the fringe of the Muslim world. Abū 'Abd Allah's purpose was served by the situation of the Kutāma, largely independent but intermittently aggrieved, able and willing to band together in a new *islām* for a new conquest. What made the appeal effective was doubtless the technique of secrecy, watching and waiting for the appointed hour, which gave time to win support and build an army. The reluctant were coerced, a horde of horsemen prepared, and the moment set for 903, the year 290 of the *Hijra*, when the Mahdi was due to reveal himself.

As the year approached, the crisis developed. The Carmathians set up a robber-state at Hofuf in eastern Arabia, from where they began to raid across the desert. In the absence of Ibrāhīm II in Sicily, Abū 'Abd Allah attacked Mila in 902. Repulsed, he returned to the attack in 903, while the Carmathians invaded Syria. The Mahdi did not appear;

¹ al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān (al-Qaḍī 'I-Nu'mān), *Iftitāḥ al-Da'wa wa ibtidā' al-Dawla*, ed. by W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1970).

instead, Sa'īd b. Husayn went covertly from Syria to the Maghrib, where he eventually reached Sijilmasa.¹ But at Damascus the Tulunid governor, the Turk Ṭughj b. Juff, was surprised and routed, and the Iraqi army of the new caliph, Muktafī, was required to expel the intruders. In 904 the 'Abbasid troops came back as invaders. The Tulunid commanders were driven into Egypt. The preparations of Hārūn were interrupted when he was murdered by his uncle Shaybān. For the dynasty it was a fatal blow. Condemning the deed, army leaders like Ṭughj b. Juff sent an invitation to the 'Abbasid commander Muḥammad b. Sulaymān. In 905 the 'Abbasid army entered the country, and Shaybān surrendered. It was fitting that after the impiety of Khumārawayh and the alleged drunkenness of Hārūn, the last of the Tulunids should have been an assassin. Justice was done and seen to be done when al-Qaṭā'i, the home of such wickedness, was burnt; only the mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn, and perhaps his hospital, were spared. The 'Abbasid poets rejoiced.² Those of Egypt, on the other hand, lamented, and their nostalgia may have been rather more than a conventional response to the fall of the mighty. All of the *quwwād*, the commanders, and all of the *mawālī* of the accursed dynasty were deported to Iraq. But while Ṭughj b. Juff, for example, was appointed governor of Qinnaṣrīn in Palestine, some of the officers en route to Baghdad escaped at Aleppo. Under one Ibn al-Khalij, they made their way back to defeat the new 'Abbasid prefect and drive him from Fuṣṭāṭ. Acclaiming a son of Khumārawayh as the rightful representative of the caliph in Egypt, Ibn al-Khalij was hailed as a deliverer until his capture and execution in 906. Both his name, 'son of the canal', and his fame are significant. The Tulunids had created an army upon whose loyalty and vested interest their survival had depended. When that loyalty was shaken, and Turks like Ṭughj b. Juff saw their future with a different master, the fallen rulers were retrospectively identified with the cause of the men of Egypt, half military, half popular, which went back beyond Ibn Ṭūlūn through the rebellion of Ibn al-Arquṭ to the beginning of the ninth century.

¹ He is said to have done so disguised as a merchant, evading the clutches of the 'Abbasids and the Aghlabids, until he was imprisoned at Sijilmasa at the request of Ziyādat Allah III; the story is hard to verify, but all sources agree that the Mahdī was eventually brought from Sijilmasa by Abū 'Abd Allah.

² al-Kindī, *Governors and judges of Egypt*, ed. by Rhuvon Guest (Leiden and London, 1912), 248ff.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FATIMIDS

In Ifriqiya meanwhile, the Aghlabid *amir* 'Abd Allah II was murdered by his son Ziyādat Allah III in 903. This still more unnatural crime did not have the immediate results of the killing of Hārūn. In the eyes of the chroniclers, however, the martyrdom of Ibrāhīm II had been in vain. The new ruler joined in celebrating the 'Abbasid cause, protesting his loyalty to Baghdad and his determination to defend the caliph against the Isma'īlite foe. By his action the dynasty was nevertheless damned. Setif fell to Abū 'Abd Allah in 904, and the *dā'i* began the conquest of the Zab. The open country passed under his control with his victory at Kayūna in 905, the province itself with the fall of the principal citadels in 906 and 907. In 909 the last Aghlabid army, blocking the way to Kairouan, was dispersed at Laribus. Ziyādat Allah fled to the east, and the Mahdi was brought from Sijilmasa (see chapter 11, p. 647) to enter the palace city of Raqqāda in January 910. History as written by the 'Abbasids had been appropriated by their enemies. Sa'īd b. Husayn styled himself 'Ubayd Allah to become the first of the Fatimid dynasty, called after the mother of the Imams, Fāṭima, the daughter of the Prophet. The ancestry was spiritual rather than physical, a matter of reincarnation. Like the 'Abbasid claim to belong to the house of the Prophet, it was a chosen support for a challenge for the rightful headship of the Muslim world. With Ziyādat Allah, the self-proclaimed champion of Baghdad, out of the way, the confrontation of the Isma'īli *da'wa* with the 'Abbasid *dawla* became direct. Starting from a base in the west, the Fatimids set out to overthrow their rivals as the 'Abbasids themselves had once overthrown the Umayyads from a base in the east.

In other respects, however, the situation was radically different from that of 750. Then, the Muslim world had been politically united. Now, it was divided among a number of separate states, of which the 'Abbasid empire, despite its recovery of Syria and Egypt, was only one. As a government of the *Dār al-Islām*, the 'Abbasid caliphate was a fiction. It served at best to lend support to other rulers who acknowledged their allegiance, and at worst it was ignored. The Fatimids slipped easily into the system. Their *da'wa*, or 'calling', the preaching of their doctrine, went from strength to strength, but it was increasingly based upon the power of their *sulṭān*, their Ifriqiyān regime. The history of their first ten to fifteen years is the history of the way in which they found themselves to be engaged, not upon further revolution, but upon a war between two states for which the prize was Egypt. So far as the

'Abbasids were concerned, it was the period when, partly because of the need to defend Syria and Egypt, the contrast between their historic aspirations and the political reality was finally made clear. From the accession of Muqtadir in 908, the caliph was increasingly a *roi fainéant* on whose behalf the government was controlled by the commander of the army. For the next twenty-five years this was the eunuch Mu'nis b. Muẓaffar, whose rise was directly proportionate to the growth of the Fatimid threat. Whereas the 'Abbasids had attacked an energetic Umayyad monarch whose position had been undermined by civil war, the Fatimids were confronted by a nominal emperor upheld by the effective master of an efficient army.

There had been nothing inevitable about the fall of the Aghlabids in Ifriqiya. The attack of Abū 'Abd Allah had coincided with a succession crisis, converting a moment of weakness into a moment of peril which proved fatal on the battlefield. Despite its previous history and its ultimate aims, the new regime did no more than continue the drive towards a strong central government which had begun with Ibrāhīm II, and which Ziyādat Allah, who had disposed of other relatives besides his father, likewise pursued. It was in this way, by a ruthless purge of his supporters, that the Mahdi solved the problem of his own succession, disciplining the forces which the revolution had released. In 911 the *dā'i* Abū 'Abd Allah was assassinated. Over the next two years 'Ubayd Allah and his son Abū 'l-Qāṣim had to contend with a revolt among the Kutāma in the Zab in support of a rival Mahdi, as well as more conventional hostility from the peoples of Tahert, Tripoli and Sicily. But the Kutāma were converted into a regular army, a navy was formed, and in 914 the Kutāma general Ḥabāsa invaded Egypt. The invasion illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of the two sides. The force at the disposal of Takīn, the Turkish governor of Egypt, was weak, while the appearance of a new and notably successful 'Alawite champion provided a focus for the opposition manifested in Ibn al-Khalīj's adventure of 906. Barce, guarding the west, was a long way from the Nile and hard to hold; the attempt of Takīn to strengthen its government as a precaution simply provoked the Ifriqiyān expedition. After Barce, Alexandria was taken with the aid of the Fatimid fleet. Yet Alexandria, as the ninth century had shown, stood apart from the rest of the country, and the invaders' lines of communication were already very long. The further advance of 160 kilometres into the heart of Egypt proved too far. In January 915, heavily reinforced from Syria, Takīn routed the attack upon Fuṣṭāṭ at Giza on the opposite bank of the

Nile. The Fatimid army retired as Mu'nis b. Muẓaffar himself arrived from Iraq. Baghdad had shown its ability to concentrate a superior force in the time available.

The Iraqi troops, however, were unpopular, and were quickly withdrawn. All the old antipathies were resurrected as Egypt was caught between the power in the east and the power in the west. Those who had been in correspondence with the Fatimids were imprisoned; many had their hands and feet cut off by the new governor, Dhakā. But the tension was apparent when Sunnite slogans were painted on the wall of the mosque of 'Amr. The populace was divided, and when those in favour demonstrated with the support of the prefect of police, they were attacked by troops; the slogans were found to have been effaced. The Berber tribes to the west of Alexandria revolted. In 919, faced by a second Fatimid invasion under Abū 'l-Qāṣim, the son of 'Ubayd Allah, the regime almost collapsed. Yet the pattern of events was the same. Although Alexandria was captured, and the Fatimid army maintained itself in the country for two years, in the end the Ifriqiyan fleet was destroyed by ships brought from Cilicia, Alexandria was recaptured, and Abū 'l-Qāṣim and his men driven back across the desert with great loss by Mu'nis, who once again arrived from Iraq. Mu'nis was rewarded with the title al-Manṣūr, 'the victorious', his mastery of Baghdad assured. Egypt was briefly disturbed by a revolt of the army over pay, but when the veteran Takīn was reappointed in 924, the province remained quiet until his death in 933.

The Fatimids had turned their attention to the west, even though, in 921, the Mahdi had taken up residence in a city built to promote the eastern enterprise. This was al-Mahdiyya, 'the city of the Mahdi', situated to the south of Sousse on a well-selected site, a sharp promontory 180 metres across at the neck, which was barred by a wall with an immense iron gate. It was a palace fortress, a capital and a naval base with a harbour cut in the solid rock. It was also a symbol. The courtyard of the great mosque was entered not from either side, but through a grand gateway opposite the entrance to the prayer hall. By this novel means the Mahdi made a ceremonious approach to God. A new formula, 'Come to the better work', was added to the call to prayer throughout his dominions. As the earthly representative of the heavenly Imam, he naturally assumed the position of caliph, Amīr al-Mu'minīn, 'Commander of the Faithful'. The Law was to be administered in accordance with the opinion of Ja'far al-Šādiq, the sixth Imam. But although the Isma'ili creed thus became the official standard, there was no mass

conversion. The Isma'ilis came to be organized under a Chief *Dā'i*, or *Dā'i 'l-Du'āt*. The higher ranks were initiated into a secret though by no means eccentric doctrine; the lower grades were a laity. Together they formed a sect whose members within the country were for the most part the personnel of the regime. After some initial persecution, which contributed to the legends of the school of Kairouan, Sunnite Muslims were merely obliged to bear the affront of heresy in high places. They did so in the belief that any government was better than none, an extension in practice of the *siyāsa shar'iya*, the permission granted to a ruler to exercise his discretion in affairs of state. On this basis they might with a good conscience render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and unto God the things that were God's.

Just as politically, therefore, the Fatimid *da'wa* was one among other Muslim states, so in religion it was one among other groups and denominations. While it professed to be ecumenical, in keeping with the claim of its leader to be the legitimate ruler of Islam, it was in fact polemical, turning to a sacred history to confound its opponents with chapter and verse. The arguments adduced were brought to bear by Fatimid diplomacy to attack an enemy or to secure an ally. To the west of Ifrīqiya, the ideological opposition of Umayyads, Idrisids, Rustamids and Aghlabids had fallen into abeyance. It was reformed and revived by the Fatimids. In 909, the victorious Abū 'Abd Allah drove the dynasty of the Banū Midrār out of Sijilmasa when he went to fetch the Mahdi from the city. While he bided his time in the Tafilēt, Sa'id b. Ḥusayn may already have attracted a following from the Miknāsa, the people of the Banū Midrār. Together with the Banū Ifrān (Yafrān) and the Maghrāwa, the Miknāsa belonged to the Zanāta, a group of what may have been largely pastoral peoples centred on the critical area to the east, west and south of Tlemcen. These had been prominent among the Ṣufri Khawārij, the followers of Khālīd b. Ḥamīd, 'al-Zanāti', and Abū Qurra, 'al-Ifrānī', the Ṣufri Caliph of Tlemcen, as well as Abū 'l-Qāsim, 'al-Miknāsi', the founder of Sijilmasa, in the eighth century. They had since been variously submitted to the Idrisids and the Rustamids, but in accordance with the pattern of the ninth century had gone on to produce their own chiefs, such as the lord who had taken the place of an Idrisid at Šabra near Tlemcen. Although the tribesmen were still no doubt the naked horde which had overwhelmed Kulthūm in 741, these leaders were more professional warriors, horsemen who may have learned their trade in Spain. The arrival of the Fatimids set them to fight.

In 911, Tahert was finally conquered. Its Ibādī community fled into exile at Sadrāta near Wargla in the Sahara, while the remainder shifted back to the original Roman site of Tiaret a few kilometres away. Tiaret was given to the Miknāsa chief Maṣāla b. Ḥabūs, and a Miknāsī *dā'i* was appointed. Maṣāla was at once opposed by the Banū Midrār, who returned to Sijilmasa after Abū 'Abd Allah and the Mahdi had gone, and by Muḥammad b. Khazar of the Maghrāwa from the district of Oran. About 917-21 he was nevertheless strong enough to raid Nukūr on the coast of the Rif, to defeat the Idrisid Yahyā IV of Fez, and to appoint another chief of the Miknāsa, Mūsā b. Abī 'l-'Āfiya, as overlord of this western region. In 921 Maṣāla installed a more compliant member of the dynasty in Sijilmasa, and in 922/3 deposed Yahyā at Fez. The prospect of a powerful Fatimid vassal at Tiaret, however, was destroyed in 924 by the death of Maṣāla at the hands of his Maghrāwa rival, Ibn Khazar. The balance was partly redressed by Abū 'l-Qāsim. In 925 the heir apparent strengthened the Zab with the foundation of a new fortified capital at Msila under 'Alī b. Ḥamdūn; in 927 and 928 he attacked the Maghrāwa, advancing as far as Tiaret. But in 927 the Umayyad *amir* of Cordoba, 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, occupied Melilla across the Straits. In the following year, after a long period of disintegration which the Fatimids had tried to exploit, he completed the reunification of Muslim Spain. In 929 he replied to the Isma'īlite challenge by taking for himself the title of caliph, basing a military regime upon the jihad, holy war against the Christian infidel and the Fatimid impostor. Ceuta was garrisoned in 931, while Mūsā b. Abī 'l-'Āfiya went over to his side. Expeditions from Ifriqiya in 933 and 935 failed to end his influence. The power of Mūsā was broken, but in his place the Idrisids returned as clients of Cordoba. The main results of the expedition of the Fatimid general Maysūr in 935 were further to the east. A loyal governor was placed in Tiaret, while a chief of the Talkāta people of the mountains round Algiers, Ziri b. Manād, was encouraged to build a citadel at Ashīr overlooking the plateau to the south. Hope of a Zanāta ally in the region of Tlemcen gave way to reliance upon a less distant people to uphold the Fatimid interest in the west.

The new policy is attributable to a new caliph. Abū 'l-Qāsim succeeded his father 'Ubayd Allah, the Mahdi, in 934, taking the significant title of al-Qā'im, 'the bringer of the Resurrection'. It would seem that he, rather than his father, was regarded as the finally awaited one, the revealed Imam. Over the last ten years of his reign, 'Ubayd Allah is reputed to have deferred to his son as to one greater than himself. As

caliph, al-Qā'im may have been the first to employ as a sign of his supreme authority the jewelled umbrella which became one of the distinctive emblems of the dynasty.¹ On the other hand, al-Qā'im did not set out to startle or to shock the Muslim world by the extravagance of his powers. Under him first rose to prominence the man always known for his authority on the Law of the sect as al-Qāḍī 'lNu'mān. In the many writings of this chief scholar and propagandist there is none of the philosophical speculation current in Shi'ite writing in Iraq, or of the antinomianism of which the Isma'ilis were accused. The exposition of the Qāḍī was firmly grounded in Muslim scholarship, and designed to show that, like the Christian Messiah, the Fatimid Imam had come to fulfil rather than to abrogate the Law. As such it is probable that the primary intention was not to win converts, but to make out a good case. The arrival of the *Qā'im*, in fact, only served to confirm the character of the *da'wa* as this had developed since its establishment in Ifriqiya. And if from this point of view the advent of the millennium was muted, so was it also in politics. In 934 the new ruler sent out a fleet which sacked Genoa, but the expedition of Maysūr to the west in the following year served in the event to cover a withdrawal. The absence of these troops in Morocco may account for the failure to intervene effectively in Egypt in 936, but the episode reveals an unreadiness to exploit a situation that had been developing in the east since 933.

The crisis which supervened in Egypt on the death of Takīn in that year was part of the collapse of the regime of Mu'nis b. Muẓaffar in Iraq. In 932 Mu'nis had deposed and killed the Caliph Muqtadir, but in 933 he was himself overthrown and executed. The immediate cause was that recurrent weakness, an inability to pay the troops. Those who mutinied in Egypt expelled the son of Takīn, and attacked and killed the *'āmil* for his tightfistedness. It was the occasion for a return to old rivalries. For the first time, in the chronicler al-Kindī, we find the use of the term *Mashāriqa* (sing. *Mashriqi*), 'Easterners', applied to the mainly Turkish forces who stood out for Ibn Takīn against a new governor, Ibn Kayghalagh. Those who supported Ibn Kayghalagh, on the other hand, are called *Maghāriba* (sing. *Maghribī*), 'Westerners'. Towards the end of the century the use of this term was justified by the presence of a large force of Kutāma Berbers from the Maghrib, 'the West'. There had been Berbers in the Egyptian army from a very early date; if they do not appear in the accounts of Ibn Ṭūlūn, it is note-

¹ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, I, 208 trans. 300-1: the statement that he did *not* employ the umbrella may represent a copyist's error.

worthy that among the generals of Hārūn b. Khumārawayh was one al-Barbarī. Egypt was indeed the obvious source of supply for the Berber soldiers in the service of Mu'nis in Iraq who killed the Caliph Muqtadir. But in Egypt it may be that the term Maghāribā was not yet so precise, merely an opposite of 'Easterner' which embraced troops of several origins.

Initially the Maghāribā were victorious. At the accession of a new caliph in Baghdad in 934, Ibn Takīn reappeared in Egypt, claiming appointment in succession to Ibn Kayghalagh, but he was defeated in battle and exiled to Upper Egypt. A final attempt to restore some order to the empire, however, led to the installation at Damascus of one Faḍl b. Ja'far, charged with the supervision of Syria and Egypt, and in particular with the collection of revenue, which since the recovery of Egypt from the Tulunids had once again been a separate office. Ibn Kayghalagh was dismissed, and Muḥammad b. Ṭughj b. Juff, the son of the old Tulunid general, was nominated in his place. Ibn Kayghalagh and the Maghāribā prepared to resist, but Ibn Kayghalagh stood down at the approach of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj in 935, supported by the Cilician fleet. Abandoned, the Maghāribā succeeded in capturing the fleet as it sailed on the inland waterways. Under their captain Ḥabashī b. Aḥmad, they raided Fustāt, then escaped via Alexandria and Barce to Ifriqiya. In response to their appeal, Abū 'l-Qāsim, al-Qā'im, sent an expedition in 936 which captured Alexandria, but was quickly driven out. It was not to be compared to the great invasions of 914 and 919. The Fatimids were not prepared to take advantage of the general instability in the east.

In Iraq the struggle for power continued as the army commanders succeeded each other and the caliphs were deposed and blinded, while the Carmathians snatched the Black Stone from the Ka'ba at Mecca, Mosul in northern Iraq fell to the Hamdanid dynasty, and western Persia was overrun by the Buwayhids or Buyids, the Shi'ite leaders of a people from the mountains of the Caspian who in 934 made their capital at Shiraz in the south. In Syria, Faḍl b. Ja'far was at the centre of a complicated marriage alliance between himself, Muḥammad b. Ṭughj, and Ibn Rāyiq, the *amir al-umara'* (commander-in-chief) at Baghdad. In 939 the arrangement brought Ibn Ṭughj the honorific Persian title of al-Ikhshīd, i.e. Servant (of the caliph). At the end of the year, driven from Baghdad by a rival, Ibn Rāyiq himself occupied Syria, but his death in 941 left the country to Muḥammad. The power of the Ikhshīd was formally extended in 943, when his authority over

Egypt and Syria was recognized by the caliph, and he received on the one hand the lordship of Cilicia, and on the other the government of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina. These were mixed blessings, for Cilicia was coming under Byzantine attack, and Mecca and Medina were vulnerable to attack by the Carmathians from across the peninsula. In 944 Ibn Ṭughj suffered an actual reverse when Aleppo and the north of Syria was lost to the Hamdanids from Mosul. But, like Ibn Ṭūlūn, he had successfully created his own Egyptian dominion. In 945 the redistribution of power in the Fertile Crescent was complete when the Buwayhids took Baghdad itself. Although Shi'ites, they refused to recognize the Fatimid claim to the caliphate, preferring to install themselves as protectors of the 'Abbasids. In this way the old line survived, but as an anomaly, its members holding an office stripped of all but the name. When Ibn Ṭughj died in 946, the 'Abbasid empire had at last disappeared, its government finally dispersed among more competent successors.

As the soldiers reached a solution to the problem of power which had proved in the end impossible to achieve through the old *dawla*, the incidence of popular rebellion declined. The Fatimids and the Carmathians had turned their successful movements into states. In Egypt, one Ibn al-Sarrāj, an 'Alawite rebel who 'went out' in Upper Egypt in 942 and quickly fled to the west, did indeed continue the tradition. But the activities of the Maghāriba had shown not merely that the Qā'im, of whom great things were to be expected, was unready to act, but that agitation was largely confined to the army. If dissatisfaction and zeal remained, spontaneity had been eclipsed by professionalism. It was ironical therefore that in Ifriqiya matters were very different. Not only did the Qā'im not go abroad to seize the power he claimed; his reign came to an end in the midst of a revolution inspired by the fervour his father had aroused. This fervour had always been dangerous. Following the assassination of Abū 'Abd Allah, 'Ubayd Allah had been faced with a rival Mahdi among the Kutāma. In addition to the Barghawāṭa and their prophet in the far west, a prophet called Hā Mīm, after one of the suras or chapters of the Koran, had appeared in the Moroccan Rif in the 920s. In 934, on the death of 'Ubayd Allah, a rival Qā'im, Ibn Ṭālūt, rebelled among the Berbers of Tripoli. The weapon turned decisively against the dynasty in the hand of Abū Yazīd, the Ṣāḥib al-Ḥimār, 'the Man on a Donkey'. He was born, it is said, in the Sudan to a merchant of the Djerid by a black slave bought at Tadmekka, hence his further appellation, al-Ḥabashī 'l-Aswad, 'black Ethiop'. Likewise he is said to

have spent a long career as scholar and teacher at Tahert and in the Djerid, becoming the head of the Nukkārī branch of the Ibādīs, those who believed that an unjust ruler should be deposed. Much of this is perhaps once again an 'imitation of Muḥammad', in this case distorted by hostile reports. What seems clear is that he spent many unaccounted-for years among the Hawwāra people of the Aures mountains between Tunisia and the Zab, whence he emerged in 943.

Because in the end he failed, Abū Yazīd has a bad reputation in Ismā'īlī, Sunni and Ibādī accounts alike, as the 'enemy of God', the great destroyer, one of the legendary scourges of the land. Because of this reputation, it is difficult to perceive the reasons for his initial success. The fact that the regime gave offence to the pious is not a sufficient explanation. Fatimid taxes were deemed illegal – that is, not according to the Law. This however was true of any Muslim government, whose revenues like its administration were based on other things besides the *sharī'a*. There is no evidence that such taxes were an excessive burden on the economy, although they were collected strictly, and doubtless gave cause for material as well as moral complaint. Probably more important was a harsh policy towards the tribes among whom the rebellion began. Before Abū Yazīd made any appeal to the people at large as the defender of true religion against the heretic, the populace against the tyrant, or self-interest against the state, he should be credited with achieving the kind of military following built up among the tribes of the Aures which Abū 'Abd Allah had created among the Kutāma. Like the Mahdi, he came as a deliverer. Once begun, his campaign attracted the wider following which seems to have joined in every major rebellion, and it proved Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Qā'im as vulnerable as any Aghlabid faced with a general rising. Ignoring the forces centred on Msila to the west, Abū Yazīd went east from the Aures towards Kairouan, riding, it is said, on the donkey which gave him his soubriquet and his apocalyptic allure. Taking the city while his opponents were disconcerted by a revolt at Tunis, he received the approval of the '*ulamā'*', and exchanged his previous austerity for what the sources condemn as luxury, but which were probably the trappings of sovereignty. Coins were struck in his name. From Kairouan, Abū Yazīd went on to defeat and kill Maysūr, the Fatimid commander-in-chief, advancing with legendary atrocity to the siege of Mahdiya. Begun in January 945, the siege lasted eight months, during which time the power of the Qā'im extended no further than the great iron doors of his fortress city.

Mahdiya, however, proved impregnable. When Abū Yazīd eventually

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retired, the Fatimid forces broke out of the city, while those of the Zab under 'Alī b. Ḥamdūn and Zīrī b. Manād took the rebel in the rear. When the Qā'im died in May 946, the final battle was at hand. Kairouan barricaded itself against Abū Yazīd on his return from an attempt upon Sousse. The historic capital of the country was occupied instead by Ismā'il, the new Imam, who fought off the rebel's assault until the battle was won. Abū Yazīd fled to the west, while the Andalusian fleet sent to his aid by 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, in the expectation of his victory, turned back. The announced revolution came to nothing. During the winter of 946-7, the would-be sovereign was pursued by Ismā'il and his lieutenants, Ja'far, son of 'Alī b. Ḥamdūn, who had died in the fighting, and Zīrī b. Manād. In August 947 Abū Yazīd was killed near Msila. His skin, stuffed with straw, made a fearful trophy.¹ Tiaret which had defected, was recovered. Ismā'il returned to take the title of al-Manṣūr, 'the Victorious', and to build at Kairouan a new palace fortress under the name of Ṣabra, 'Fortitude', known as al-Manṣūriya, 'the city of Manṣūr'. Situated to the south-south-east of the city, it took the place of Raqqāda a kilometre or two away, which became a park and a parade ground. To it, from Mahdiya, was transferred the seat of government. The dynasty took on a new lease of life. The last resistance of the Aures was overcome, while the defence of the west was assured by Zīrī b. Manād at Ashīr, which was enlarged and strengthened. Zīrī's son Buluggīn occupied Miliana at the head of the Chelif, on the edge of the territory of the Maghrāwa leader Muḥammad b. Khazar. Ja'far retained his father's seat at Msila as governor of the Zab. With Abū Yazīd safely accounted for as the great Enemy who should come against the Imam before the final triumph, al-Manṣūr was free to attend to the ultimate victory. A symbolic act introduced the new era. In 951 the Carmathians were persuaded to return to Mecca the Black Stone they had removed from the Ka'ba twenty years before. In 953, however, al-Manṣūr died. It was left to his son, al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah, 'he who is mighty by the religion of God', to pursue the great enterprise to a fresh conclusion.

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING UP TO THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT

Circumstances had changed yet again. By the middle of the tenth century AD, the troubles which had afflicted both Islam and Christendom

¹ For Abū Yazīd, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden and London, 1954—), under 'Abū Yazīd'.

over the past hundred years had resulted in a new political order. The world about the Mediterranean was dominated by a series of states which owed their success to victory at home and abroad. 'Abd al-Raḥmān III had refounded the Umayyad dominion of Andalus. In the Christian West, Germany and Italy had been formed into a new empire by Otto the Great. Legislating against the estates of the aristocracy in favour of the property of smallholders, Romanus I had recreated the Byzantine empire as a formidable power. The Buwayhids had taken control of Iraq. In Egypt and Syria the survival of the Ikhshidid Dynasty was assured after the death of its founder by his *ghulām*, 'page', the black eunuch Abū 'l-Misk Kāfūr, on behalf of his young son Unūjūr. The name is a pun, Misk meaning 'musk', which is black, and Kāfūr meaning 'camphor', which is white. Coming to Fustāt as a slave either from Abyssinia or more probably from Nubia, he became the virtual ruler of the country in succession to his patron. For a man from south of the Sahara, his achievement was unique, surpassing that of *sūdān* who rose from the ranks of 'abīd and *fityān* to stop, like the Fatimid commander Ṣandal, at the rank of general. His achievement was so great, however, because in other respects it was typical of a form of palace government in which the queen mother was a central figure, while the chief eunuch, the master of the household, became an officer whose responsibilities might amount to those of head of government, relegating the vizier (*waṣīr*), the head of the administration, to a subordinate position. In Fatimid Ifrīqiya at this time, the post was held by the eunuch Jawdhar. There, as in Egypt, it carried the title of *Ustādh*, 'Tutor', since it involved the education of the royal children. It was this duty which, with the connivance of the queen mother, gave Kāfūr his authority on the death of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj, since he took power as guardian of the young prince. That power he retained, despite at least one attempt by Unūjūr to break free.

Relations with the Buwayhids of Baghdad were good, and the fiction of 'Abbasid suzerainty was upheld by the recital of the *keḥḥba*, the address at the Friday prayer, in the name of the reigning caliph. The attempt of the Hamdanid ruler of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawla, to seize Damascus on the death of Ibn Ṭughj was defeated, although Cilicia was lost; having thus acquired control over the Byzantine frontier, Sayf al-Dawla turned away to put his energies into annual campaigns against the empire in the north. Control of Egypt was established in 947 with the defeat of the rebellion of Ghalbūn, the governor of Upper Egypt. As for many years past, the far south was beyond effective control;

nevertheless, when after a raid on the oases of Kharga in 950, the Nubians invaded Upper Egypt in 956, the Egyptians retaliated with the sack of Qasr Ibrim, the Nubian fortress on the Nile some 210 km south of Aswan. In 954 the Byzantine fleet descended on Farama on the coast of the Delta. For the moment, however, such incidents were isolated. Kāfūr controlled the country by patronage, farming the taxes for revenue and, it is said, keeping his protégé on a very modest allowance; it is likely that 'the palace' in general, however, was well provided with estates. As far as the administration was concerned, it was probably a formative period, when the 'men of the pen' as distinct from the 'men of the sword' were established in offices, notably the *Dīwān al-Rasā'il* or *Dīwān al-Inshā'*, the chancery, which continued to develop over the next two hundred years. These offices bred their own traditions, presented by a long series of authors who expounded the history of the country as well as the history and practice of the administration from a clerical point of view. In these traditions a much less shadowy founding figure than Ibn Mudabbir is the Jewish convert Ya'qūb b. Killīs, who was discovered by Kāfūr, and went on to dominate the administration for twenty years thereafter. Whatever his achievements, he may be taken to represent the continuity between the administration of the Ikhshidids and their successors.

Despite such professional memories, however, too little is known about the government of the Ikhshidids, partly because the period is still very early for information to survive, partly because al-Kindī died at Fustāt in 961 before he could complete the *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, the 'History of the Governors', which is the essential narrative of the period since the conquest. His work closes with the death of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj, and the continuation of the story down to the death of Kāfūr is not only slight, but tails off rapidly. This dearth of information is not made good elsewhere, but is in fact characteristic. The author responsible was a younger contemporary, Ibn Zūlāq, who died in 997, and added the postscript to al-Kindī while himself composing a work which displayed the same bias, a long notice of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj, followed by something much briefer and more anecdotal on his successors. It is probably to be explained by the fact that for Ibn Zūlāq, and hence for those who followed him, the later Ikhshidids lived like the Tulunids in the shadow of the future. In their case, they were not so much blamed or lamented as ignored, while Kāfūr, their mentor, was placed in a limbo of stories appropriate to his origins and career. It was a treatment which came to be reserved for chief ministers, ensuring for them a place of honour in

the records of the 'men of the pen', while very often disguising the circumstances of their political career. As far as the history of Egypt was concerned, a period of some twenty years was effectively sterilized, a period during which the future was prepared elsewhere.

The Fatimid threat was not immediately apparent. The return of the Black Stone by the Carmathians in 951 was a symbolic act which asserted the claim of the Fatimids to be the true protectors of the Holy Places, and hence the true rulers of Islam. It was directed therefore at the 'Abbasids, but more specifically at the Ikhshidids, on whom the guardianship had been bestowed. In its own way it recognized the changes which had taken place over the past forty years: while the 'Abbasid caliph had become a figurehead, Egypt had become a fully independent power. More than ever before, it stood in the way of Fatimid ambitions in the east, but equally it called for circumspection. As the Qādī al-Nu'mān approached the height of his skill and influence, his writings developed the Fatimid case at a high intellectual level. While the propaganda mounted, however, and the missionaries worked in secret throughout the Middle East, the Fatimid forces were engaged in the west. The efforts of the Ifriqiyan navy had been directed against the western extremity of the Byzantine empire, in southern Italy. From the time of Ibrāhīm II, Sicily had been ruled from North Africa only with difficulty. Troubles which began in 936 were not put down until 941, and recommenced during the rebellion of Abū Yazīd. In 947 Ḥasan al-Kalbī recovered the island for Maṣṣūr, taking his place alongside Zīrī b. Maṣṣād and Ja'far b. 'Alī as a lieutenant with sufficient independence to transmit his office to his son. He and his descendants resumed the raids of the Aghlabids upon the Italian mainland with considerable success. Meanwhile Mu'izz, like his grandfather al-Qā'im, turned his attention to Morocco. On the death of Maṣṣūr, the governor of Tiaret, Ya'lā al-Ifrānī, changed his allegiance to Cordoba, prompting his rival, the Maghrāwa leader Muḥammad b. Khazar, to make his peace with the Fatimids. The old rulers of Sijilmasa, the Banū Midrār, were once again independent, although the influence of the Umayyads can be seen in the reigning prince's abandonment of Ṣufri Kharijism in favour of Malikite orthodoxy. Northern Morocco, where the Idrisids still survived, was dominated by 'Abd al-Raḥmān III through Ceuta and Tangier. In 955/6, however, the Fatimid fleet raided the Spanish port of Almeria, and in 958/9 the Fatimid general Jawhar overran the whole of the region at stake, capturing Tiaret, Sijilmasa and Fez.

With the west temporarily secure, Mu'izz could turn at last to the

east. In doing so he enjoyed an inestimable advantage, the affluence which came from economic prosperity.¹ The description of the Ismā'īlī traveller Ibn Ḥawqal, who visited the Maghrib in 947-51 and again in 971, may well have been biased. It is nevertheless compatible with the description by his Andalusian contemporary, Ibn al-Warrāq, preserved by the eleventh-century author al-Bakrī, writing in Spain in 1068. Through its officials, who bought their posts and retained anything which they collected in addition to what was due, the Fatimid regime levied taxes on persons and property, agriculture, pasture and commerce. Abuses were clearly possible, and Ibn Ḥawqal's statement that twice as much could have been collected with little more severity seems ingenuous. On the other hand, it is equally clear that Ifrīqiya could afford to pay. Since the Arab conquests, geography and history had combined to recreate a market economy in the country after the return towards subsistence in late classical times. The *sūq*, the market, might take the form of an open space on neutral ground between two peoples, or it might become the focus of a new settlement. It was reproduced more substantially in the towns, which drew in foodstuffs and primary products in return for manufactures and luxuries. By such means local demands were met, while articles might travel across the country or enter from outside. The network supported the regular trade of the caravans, which tended to move along particular routes at particular times, acquiring the name of *mawāṣim* (sing. *mawṣim*), 'seasons' (whence 'monsoon'). Traffic of this kind, duplicated by shipping at sea, brought goods over long distances, the specialities of each region to be exchanged for those of another. Ifrīqiya was at the centre of such a system, attracting the trade of the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Sahara. Over the years, supply and demand had built up to a high level.

The *sūq*, the actual market, was of great importance. In the countryside it was governed by custom as a time and place of truce; in the towns it was regulated by an overseer, the *muḥtasib*. There it became much more elaborate, a place where things were made as well as bought and sold. Particular commodities acquired particular importance. Grain, for example, the most basic of all, was traded in the first instance to make up for temporary shortages. Thus it tended to move from the better grain-growing areas to more pastoral regions and to peoples

¹ Examples of the period from the tenth to the twelfth century illustrating this reconstruction of the way in which the market economy worked will be found in H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirides, Xe-XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1962), 603-86; S. D. F. Goitein, *A Mediterranean society*, 2 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967—, in progress).

whose cultivation was more erratic. In the case of cities, the demand for grain was a constant, often leading to long-distance trade. Kairouan was regularly supplied from the region of Beja in the area of higher rainfall to the north-west, while the cities of the Sahel imported grain from Sicily. In return they exported olives and oil from the coastal districts they controlled. The oasis cities of the Djerid exported dates from their extensive palm groves. The pressing of olive-oil, however, was an elementary industry, and this aspect became more pronounced when it was a question of animals and animal products. All cities imported animals for meat; the butchers, who performed a religious function when they slaughtered a beast by cutting its throat as the Law required, were members of a wealthy and important profession. At the same time they supplied the hides and skins for a large tanning industry, while the wool and hair went to make cloth. It was the cloth industry which had become the distinguishing feature of Ifriqiyan production for export, from regions such as the Jebel Nefusa as well as from the towns. The cloth was mainly woollen, but there was cotton and linen, and even silk was woven and embroidered. Such fabrics, of varying fineness, enabled Ifriqiya to sustain its position as a focus of trade in the Mediterranean and in the Sahara, where cloth was not only a commodity but a form of currency. In return, slaves continued to come northwards into and across the desert.

In the *sūq*, goods might be bought from the producer or the maker. Even in local commerce, however, the professional trader was a prominent figure, often working as an agent, *simsār* (pl. *samāsira*), entrusted with the sale of goods in return for a commission, as well as buying and selling on his own account. Such middlemen handled individual items from jewellery to slaves, or bulk commodities like a crop produced by a number of small-holders or gathered by a landlord as rent from his tenants. In trade over a distance, they acted in similar fashion, owning part of the stock themselves while undertaking to sell goods entrusted to them, or to employ money given them for the purpose. *Qirād* was a general name for such an undertaking, but there were different kinds of contract, probably resembling those found at a later date in the trade of Ifriqiya with Italy. The merchant, *tājir* (pl. *tujjār*), was responsible for transport; on land, pack-animals would be bought and sold for each journey, but at sea the merchant might be the owner, sometimes the captain, of the ship. To assist him he relied heavily on his family, which might extend to the clan, the community or the confession, as with the Jews and the Ibādīs. Sometimes whole

peoples were involved, as with the tribes who obtained some share in the traffic passing through their country, perhaps by demanding payment, perhaps by supplying transport, or perhaps by monopolizing the trade. In such cases political leadership and organization were involved, as at Zawila in the Fezzan, where the family of the Banū Khaṭṭāb became rulers at the beginning of the tenth century.

In Ifrīqiya, the *sultān*, the government, although not ostensibly a commercial institution, was in fact closely concerned, and exercised a powerful influence. This came only initially, and partially, from the taxation of trade. It arose more fundamentally from what the state had at its disposal. When many taxes were paid in kind, the state came into possession of much of the country's surplus, quite apart from what was derived from the monarch's estates, largely leased to cultivators under various sharecropping agreements. Produce thus accumulated was used for payment, or offered for sale. In either case, it came onto the market. Governors, tax-collectors and troops, who took or received much of their reward in kind, were important suppliers of commodities, such as grain, to the public. So was the ruler himself. The business was handled by merchants, who naturally profited; the *tājir al-sultān*, the 'sultan's merchant', who acted for the government, was a great man. Such merchants extended their activities on behalf of their patrons to foreign trade, employing the capital entrusted to them in ventures on a grand scale; the Fatimid raid upon Almeria in 955/6, for example, is said to have been in revenge for the capture at sea of a Fatimid vessel sailing from Sicily to Ifrīqiya by a much larger ship belonging to 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, bound for the east with merchandise. The interest of the state, hardly distinguishable from that of its officers, became almost equally indistinguishable from that of trade. This was all the more true since the state and its aristocracy were at the same time great consumers, their wealth affecting demand as well as supply. The more expensive goods and services, jewellery, perfumes, spices, silks, armour, weapons, horses, skilled slaves, and all the arts and crafts which went into palatial building, decorating and furnishing, were most obviously concerned – not forgetting parchment, paper and books. In this way what began with taxes and rents, augmented by sales and investments, was eventually distributed. The income, and consequently the demand, of the *'amma*, the populace, was reduced on the one hand but increased on the other.

It is not possible to say what proportion of a gross national product was represented by this income and expenditure, but if they are regarded

as typical of a fairly broad upper class, the proportion which they represented may have been fairly high. That the balance between what was taken and what was put back was favourable, and led to a measure of economic growth which persisted through the inevitable years of bad harvests and disasters both natural and man-made, might appear from the condition of the towns, which continued to flourish after their great expansion in the eighth and ninth centuries. Tunis in particular probably continued to grow; the expansion of Mahdiya may have taken place at the expense of Kairouan, and the new port certainly seems to have declined with the moving of the capital back to the older city. Another indicator, however, is provided by the history of the Saharan trade-routes in the tenth century, and especially by the trade in gold. Although Abū Yazīd was ostensibly a Kharijite, he was not representative of the Ibadite community, which repudiated the man and his movement. With Mu'izz, the relations of the Ibadite peoples of the Djerid and the Jebel Nefusa were as good as could be expected from this turbulent region. This resulted from the general attempt of the caliph to procure allies, but also reflected the prosperity of the trade into and out of Ifriqiya with which these peoples were concerned. A sign of this prosperity is provided by the ruins of Sedrata in the desert near Wargla, where the Ibādīs of Tahert took refuge after their expulsion in 911. The remains of the mosque and of some substantial residences show considerable decoration influenced by the art of the Muslim east.¹ Most important of all, however, is the appearance at this time of a direct connection across the western Sahara between Sijilmasa and the settlement of Awdaghust on the southern edge of the desert.

The connection between the two centres, which for al-Ya'qūbī was a mere rumour of 'the land of Ghust', was obvious to Ibn Ḥawqal, who visited Sijilmasa and was impressed by the value of trans-Saharan business.² His report appears to be confirmed by the excavation of the site of Tegdaoust in southern Mauritania, which has yielded articles of the Fatimid period in Ifriqiya.³ From al-Bakrī, it would seem that half of the merchants at Awdaghust were Ifriqiyān, either from Kairouan or

¹ Cf. M. van Berchem, 'Deux campagnes de fouilles sur la site de l'ancienne cité musulmane de Sedrata', *Actes des Congrès Nationaux des Sociétés Savantes* (Section d'Archéologie, Congrès 79, Algiers, 1954; Paris, 1957).

² Cf. N. Levtzion, 'Ibn Ḥawqal, the cheque, and Awdaghust', *Journal of African History*, 1968, 9, 2, 223-33; M. Brett, 'Ifriqiya as a market for Saharan trade from the tenth to the twelfth century AD', *Journal of African History*, 1969, 10, 3, 347-64, esp. 358-9.

³ Cf. D. S. Robert, 'Les Fouilles de Tegdaoust', *Journal of African History*, 1970, 11, 4, 471-93.

from the Ibadite region, who had abandoned the long route via Wargla to the Niger bend in favour of the shorter though more arduous crossing to the west; the remainder were Zanāta, presumably from Sijilmasa itself. Their trade, at least in part, was centred on gold. This came as *tibr*, dust, which was used in Awdaghust for currency, al-Bakrī noting that they had no silver for this purpose as in North Africa and Spain.¹ For export it was refined and made into twisted wire. Although gold had previously reached the Maghrib by the older routes from the western Sudan, this sudden boom, comparable to the gold-rush in the Wadi Allaqi a hundred years before, indicated a new demand for a new use. Gold had always been valued as treasure to be hoarded in works of art and craft, from gold vessels and jewellery to garments embroidered with gold thread and illuminated manuscripts. Its use as currency, however, was restricted. Copper was used for the lowest denomination of the coinage, the *fals* or *fil*s (pl. *fulūs*), from Latin *foliis*, the copper coin of Byzantium. Above the *fals* was the silver *dirham*, from Greek *drachma*, derived however from the coinage of the old Persian empire. The *dirham* was valued at about a tenth of the gold *dīnār*, from Latin *denarius*, the equivalent of the Byzantine *solidus*. In fact it is likely, as al-Bakrī's reference to Awdaghust suggests, that normally only the copper and the silver coins were used as money, the dinar being on the whole a money of account, a means of expressing a value rather than an actual sum. A principal purpose of the dinar as a coin was to be a mark of sovereignty on the part of the ruler in whose name it was struck. Throughout the ninth century, it would seem that gold was sufficiently plentiful in Iraq to be used as a currency, but in the crisis of the 920s and 930s the gold disappeared, and the Buwayhids returned to a silver standard. In Egypt, Ibn Ṭūlūn and his son may have been able to increase the circulation of gold. By the middle of the tenth century, however, it was the turn of Ifriqiya. The Fatimid caliph required gold not only for treasure, but for war. His demand, making itself felt on the market, led to the opening up of the route through Sijilmasa in a way which owed little to the fleeting Fatimid control of the city. Under Mu'izz, this substantial addition to the range of the Ifriqiyān economy yielded a supply large enough to be employed for political ends.

As Jawhar departed for the Maghrib al-Aqṣā in 958, the Byzantine

¹ al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l mamālik*, ed. by M. G. de Slane (Algiers, 1911); French trans. by M. G. de Slane, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, 2nd edn (Algiers, 1911-13; reprinted Paris, 1965), 158, trans. 300.

generals Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimiskes at long last turned successfully upon the aggressive Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo with the taking of two cities in northern Syria and Iraq. As Jawhar returned to Kairouan in 960, Nicephorus Phocas launched the invasion of Crete, occupied by Muslim pirates since 827. In 961 the reconquest of the island was complete. In reply, Sayf al-Dawla, as champion of Islam, preached jihad against the Christian enemy. This led to no more than riots against the Copts in Egypt, where Unūjūr had died in 960 to be succeeded by his brother 'Alī, still under the tutelage of Kāfūr. In 962 Nicephorus advanced into Syria to capture Aleppo itself, although Sayf al-Dawla held out in the citadel. In Egypt the Nile was low, and Berber tribes coming from the west into the region of Alexandria unsettled the Arabs of the western Ḥawf. These Arabs, now amalgamated into the tribes of the Banū Qurra, began to raid into the Delta. When Nicephorus Phocas became emperor in 963, these difficulties increased; the Carmathians from across the Arabian peninsula attacked Ikhshidid Syria, while the Nubians advanced into Upper Egypt as far as Akhmim. With the Nile flood again low, 964 saw the destruction of an expedition sent against the Berbers around Alexandria; a second expedition against the beduin of Transjordan had achieved little. The Carmathians continued their attacks in conjunction with the tribes, and the combination of such raiders east and west began to be a serious nuisance. In 965 Nicephorus Phocas completed the conquest of Cilicia, and the fleet which he sent to occupy Cyprus destroyed what was probably the whole of the Egyptian navy as it cruised off the island. Standing at the peak of his career, in 966 Kāfūr was recognized by the 'Abbasid caliph as the legitimate ruler of Egypt in succession to 'Alī, but the Byzantine emperor was at the gates of Antioch, the beduin plundered the pilgrimage from Damascus to Mecca of wealth belonging to Syrian refugees fleeing to the Holy Places, and the Nile continued low.

The Byzantine initiative was essentially independent; the series of low Niles was unfortunate; but the attacks of the Carmathians and the nomads were concerted. A grand design was shaping, in which Fatimid diplomacy, backed by Fatimid preaching and by Fatimid bribes, envisaged the isolation of the Ikhshidid regime, and its steady erosion. At the court of Mu'izz, the influence of the venerable Qāḍī 'l-Nu'mān was at its height. His works, submitted to the caliph for correction or confirmation by this supreme representative of God on earth, set out in full the doctrines and the claims of the Fatimids. The propaganda of the *da'wa* was relayed to the Faithful as far away as India by the mis-

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sionary apparatus of the sect. The Byzantine victories could be exploited. The Carmathians were willing to co-operate to their own advantage. The tribes were not simply marauders from outside. On the borders of Egypt they lived alongside the government, habitually demanding concessions which were as often denied. Aswan was under the control of Arab groups. To the west of the Nile in the oases of Dakhla and Farafra, the Banū 'l-'Abdūn were a Lawāta Berber family ruling over a Coptic agricultural population. Beside them, according to Ibn Ḥawqal, dwelt the Arab tribes of the Banū Hilāl, who made their summer quarters in the oases at the time of the harvest. Already it is likely that they represented an amalgam of peoples, as the underlying process of fission and fusion broke down existing groups, while others formed upon dominant lineages, leading to a steady transformation of the inhabitants of the eastern Sahara from Berber into Arab. In the north, the Banū Qurra continued a long tradition of revolt. Against the perpetual drift of individual families into the peasant population of the valley, long after their ancestors had been excluded from the regular army, the prospect of something more rewarding than the simple nomadic way of life helped to keep the bands together on the fringe of the military and political system. In the 960s, such peoples provided the Fatimids with the material for a widespread coalition.

Alliances were made with the Ibādī shaykhs of Tripolitania. Beginning in 966, as Jawhar set out again for the west on a leisurely tax-collecting tour, preparations were made for a stately march upon Egypt. The wells along the route were inspected, and as far as the frontier town of Ajdābiya the building of fortified pavilions was undertaken to provide the commander of the army, or the caliph himself, with accommodation at each stage of the journey. In 967, as the veteran Sayf al-Dawla died at Aleppo, the Fatimids made peace with the Byzantines in Sicily. The Christian empire resigned itself to the loss of the island, while both sides were free to pursue their converging ambitions in the Levant. Kāfūr, in his capacity as guardian of the Holy Places, negotiated the return by the Carmathians of some of the plunder captured by the beduin the previous year. At the beginning of 968 he received from Baghdad robes of office and the honorific title of *Ustādh*, which he had borne in Egypt since the days of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj, but three months later he died, to be succeeded by the child Aḥmad, son of 'Alī, whose claims he had previously set aside. Real power fell to Ja'far b. Faḍl b. al-Furāt, the vizier who had been for so long subordinate to the chief eunuch, while the regent Ḥasan b. 'Ubayd Allah, a cousin of 'Alī, took

charge of Syria and Palestine. It was a fragile arrangement. Ya'qūb b. Killīs, the Jewish convert whom Kāfūr had promoted in the administration at the expense of Ja'far, fled to the Fatimid caliph Mu'izz. In October the Carmathians overran Syria, driving out Ḥasan, who returned to Egypt to imprison the vizier. Meanwhile Nicephoras Phocas laid siege to Antioch.

Jawhar returned to Ifriqiya with the tribute of the west to find a great army assembled. In January 969 Ja'far b. Faḍl was released and reinstated, and Ḥasan returned to Syria, buying off the Carmathians with an indemnity and the promise of an annual tribute. But in February Jawhar set out from Kairouan, and by May he was at Alexandria. The Ikhshidid regime, impoverished by years of famine, given up for lost by those who regarded a Fatimid victory as inevitable, was divided, with a majority in favour of surrender. Ja'far sent to negotiate the entry of Jawhar into the capital. It was delayed only by a brief resistance from the Ikhshidid guard. In July Jawhar took possession of Fuṣṭāṭ, and immediately traced out the site of a new palace city to be a capital worthy of his master. This was beyond the area of al-Qaṭā'i, the city of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, still further to the north-east of Fuṣṭāṭ where the Ikhshidids had had their residence on the bank of the Khalij, the large canal which had once connected the Nile at Babylon with the Red Sea. The new city of al-Qāhira, Cairo, 'the Victorious', was a massively walled rectangle about a kilometre in length, centred on two principal palaces, with the Mosque of al-Azhar in the south-eastern quadrant. It was a monument to a great achievement. Virtually without a blow, without any revolutionary violence, simply with the promise of government in accordance with the Law, the Fatimids stepped into the place of the Ikhshidids. Their victory was a masterpiece of the art of succession, of capturing support for a winning cause. Ironically, it was a measure of the Ikhshidid achievement in creating a political system in which such a smooth transfer of power from one dynasty to another could occur.

Preparations went on methodically for the climax, the arrival of the Fatimid caliph himself, which waited only for the completion of the building. Undeterred by the news from Syria, where the coalition had fallen apart, and Fatimids and Carmathians were fighting each other for possession of Damascus, undeterred too by trouble in the west, Mu'izz settled his Ifriqiyān estate, and in August 972 set out with his household, his treasure and the coffins of his ancestors on a long, slow, triumphal procession along the coast. In May 973 he arrived at Barce,

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where he took ship for Alexandria and Fustāt. In June he entered his new city of al-Qāhira. It was intended for what it became, a permanent home. The possibly apocryphal detail of a palace especially built to house the 'Abbasid rival when Baghdad at last should fall illustrates the fact that the dynasty had no intention of moving a second time. The fighting in Syria was undoubtedly an effective hindrance to any advance upon Iraq, but that was not central to the design. At the summit of their career, the Fatimids did not reopen the question of the Islamic empire as a single state. So far as government was concerned, the Ikhshidid inheritance was sufficient. Through it, the Fatimids came to their full stature. As they settled in Egypt, their achievement was to complete the new political order of the tenth century.

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Nothing illustrates this better than the arrival of Mu'izz at Cairo as the pattern of his new empire was already taking shape. When, after the fall of Egypt, real fighting broke out in Syria, the Fatimids were not so successful. Within a few years they were trying to maintain a frontier north of Damascus against incursions from Iraq and expeditions by the Byzantines, who had taken Antioch in October 969. In the west, Mu'izz had dealt with a revolt in the Aures mountains which only briefly disturbed his good relations with the Ibadite shaykhs. But the prospect of his departure had led to a war over the succession. By the end of 970, Mu'izz was turning away from his first choice as lieutenant of Ifriqiya, Ja'far b. 'Alī, the governor of the Zab at Msila, who was suspected of relations with Cordoba, and was looking instead to Zīrī b. Manād and his son Buluggīn at Ashīr. Early in 971 Buluggīn defeated and killed the Maghrāwa chief Muḥammad b. al-Khayr near Tlemcen. But Ja'far abandoned Msila with his treasure and his guards, and joined with Muḥammad's son to defeat and kill Zīrī at Tiaret. While Ja'far took Zīrī's head to present to the Umayyad Ḥakam II, who had succeeded his father, the great 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, at Cordoba in 961, Buluggīn restored the situation with a second victory over the Zanāta at Sijilmasa, to be rewarded with the government of Ja'far's territories in addition to his father's. In 972 he accompanied his sovereign on the first stages of his journey to the east, then remained behind apparently as viceroy over all except Sicily and Tripoli. As a mark of this exceptional favour he was renamed and restyled Sayf al-Dawla ('Sword of State') Abū 'l-Futūḥ ('Man of Victories') Yūsuf.

It was characteristic of Buluggīn that despite this elevation, he at once returned to fight in the west. Although he held the Maghrib for the caliph, confirmed in this position by Mu'izz's son and successor 'Azīz in 975, and was further endowed with Tripoli in 979, he remained essentially the lord of the west with his capital at Ashīr. His visits to Kairouan were few, and from 974 the capital and the whole of the Tunisian region were entrusted to 'Abd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Kātib, 'the Secretary', an aristocratic product of the Fatimid chancery, one of the great departments of state. The whole machinery of central government was thus in the hands of a deputy, and it was he who was apparently the recipient of the caliph's demands upon the province. In 976 'Abd Allah assembled a fleet, perhaps in support of 'Azīz's first expedition to Syria, and went on to make a special levy which in the event 'Azīz ordered to be repaid. After the final departure of Buluggīn for the west in 979, the *ṣijillāt*, the official letters of the caliph in Egypt, were sent to the viceroy as far away as Fez, and returned from there to Kairouan long after their date of composition¹ – but these documents were probably official newsletters of the progress of the cause of the Imam in the east rather than instructions. 'Abd Allah divided his time between Mahdiya and Šabra/Manšūriya, where he amassed a treasure, and where in 983 he assembled a force of 'abīd *sūdān*, black slave soldiers, several thousands strong, by demanding their price from the officials of the administration and his own followers. The master of Kairouan clearly commanded the obedience of appointed subordinates, many from his own entourage and all probably members of the Isma'īlite sect, who had taken the place of the Aghlabids and the *jund* in the period since 909.² Ten years after the departure of Mu'izz, the Zirids were in danger of returning to their old position as lords of the frontier at Ashīr. Kairouan, which continued to be the capital, seemed likely by contrast to produce a new dynasty.

In allowing such a situation to develop, Buluggīn acted partly from necessity. The departure of Mu'izz provoked the rebellion of Tiaret and Tlemcen, which he was obliged to suppress. The flight of Ja'far into Spain, however, had more serious consequences. After favouring the Idrisids, Ḥakam II now drove them from Fez, sending Ja'far and his brother Yaḥyā to recruit a following in the Maghrib al-Aqṣā. This policy was continued after his death in 976 by Ibn Abī 'Āmir, called

¹ Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, I, 237 trans. 347.

² Partly by assimilation; 'Abd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Kātib is said to have been of the Aghlabid family; Idris, *La Berbérie orientale*, 48–9.

Almanzor (al-Manṣūr), the great minister who became regent of Andalus. Although Ja'far returned to Spain, Yaḥyā established himself at Basra on the Atlantic coast, the Zanāta between Fez and Tlemcen rallied to the Umayyads, and in 978 the Maghrāwa chief Khazrūn b. Fulful evicted the last of the Banū Midrār from Sijilmasa. In 979 Buluggīn replied with an expedition which captured Fez, and in 980 pursued the Zanāta from Sijilmasa as far as the Umayyad base of Ceuta. Ceuta was as impregnable as ever, but Basra was taken, and from 981 to 983 the Barghawāta to the south were attacked, their ruler killed, and prisoners sent back to Kairouan. As Buluggīn returned in 983, however, the Banū Khazrūn re-entered Sijilmasa. In 984 Buluggīn died as he marched against them, and in 985 the army sent by his son was routed by a second Maghrāwa leader, Zīrī b. 'Aṭiya. Fifty years after the foundation of Ashīr to guard against such a threat, the west had reverted to the power of the Umayyads and their Zanāta allies. As a precaution, Manṣūr, the son and successor of Buluggīn, brought his main army to Ashīr but remained there, giving no aid to Ḥasan, the last Idrisid of Fez, who had appealed to 'Azīz in Egypt, and been sent by him to recover his kingdom.

At Ashīr, Manṣūr was joined by 'Abd Allah al-Kātib, who had left his son Yūsuf in his place at Kairouan and Mahdiya. In their absence, Yūsuf aided the Fatimid *dā'i* Abū 'l-Fahm, sent from Egypt, on his way into the Kutāma country, where he set up his standard in 986. When Manṣūr returned to Kairouan in 987, he found himself taking the oath of allegiance to Cairo at the hands of 'Abd Allah, who had also been appointed *dā'i* or missionary representative of the Imam in his highest and most spiritual capacity. The story as we have it has been deformed by subsequent chroniclers of the Zirid dynasty, who tell how at his accession Manṣūr first deposed and then reinstated 'Abd Allah, announcing that he himself held his power by hereditary right from his ancestors of the ancient Arab people of Himyar in the Yemen. The tale of 'Abd Allah then becomes one of rebellion against a legitimate monarch, with the connivance of Cairo. It should perhaps have dealt with the attempt of the Fatimid sovereign to impose a new settlement upon Ifrīqiya at the death of Buluggīn, preferring 'Abd Allah to Manṣūr as the principal representative of the caliph in the Maghrib, and distinguishing the Kutāma with a special envoy to mark their status as the source of recruits for a major branch of the Fatimid army in the east. On the other hand, to judge by the good relations subsequently enjoyed by Manṣūr with 'Aziz, the Fatimids may have had little to do with a domestic

affair. But however we are to understand the sequel, the assassination of 'Abd Allah and his son by Manṣūr, the hunting down in 988 of Abū 'l-Fahm, whose corpse was reputedly eaten by the *'abīd*, the revolt of the Kutāma under a pretender called Abū 'l-Faraj in 889-90, and their eventual subjection to regular government, the outcome seems clear. Manṣūr reunified the country at the cost of moving his residence in 991 from Ashīr to Ṣabra and Kairouan. His brother Yaṭṭūfat took his place at Ashīr, while the Zab was entrusted to Sa'id b. Khazrūn, brother of the ruler of Sijilmasa, who had preferred to seek his fortune with the Zirids, and was installed at Tobna (Ṭubna) from about 988. As far as Cairo was concerned, the episode helped to establish the character of the empire as an area within which the Fatimids attached very great importance to the formal acknowledgement of their supremacy, but over which they exercised no administrative control outside Egypt, Syria, and to some extent the Hejaz.

The relationship of the Zirids to their suzerain is indicated by the honorific title bestowed upon Manṣūr, 'Uddat al-'Azīz, 'the Instrument of 'Azīz' – in the loftiest sense. Their *ṭā'a*, 'obedience', hardly interfered with their power. It was, on the other hand, a solemn obligation by which they were known, not to be repudiated without risk to the loyalty of inferiors on which they themselves relied. The position of the Zirid *sulṭān* was by no means certain. The move to Ṣabra was an attempt to seat the monarchy more firmly, but it was not a final solution. In the west it meant a retreat. In 988, Zīrī b. 'Aṭīya became head of the Maghrāwa, and was recognized by Cordoba as its representative in northern Morocco. He was at once involved in a long struggle with Yaddū b. Ya'lā of the Banū Ifrān, the rival Zanāta people, for the possession of Fez. This was complicated by the intervention of Abū 'l-Bahār, a brother of Buluggīn who fled from his nephew Manṣūr, taking with him the governor of Tiaret. By 994, however, Zīrī b. 'Aṭīya was completely victorious, founding as his capital the city of Wajda (Oujda) to the west of Tlemcen. The excursion of Abū 'l-Bahār was more cause for alarm in Ifriqiya. The Zirids were beginning to divide over the sultanate – whether the succession was to be monopolized by the eldest son or to pass to one of the more senior members of the family. It was a division between a monarchy based on the size and strength of the *ḥasham*, the household army of clients and slaves, and an aristocracy which shared power by age and aptitude among the princes of the line. When Manṣūr died in 996, six months before his Fatimid suzerain 'Azīz, the accession of his son Bādīs, a boy of eleven,

was ensured by the *'abīd*, the most probably Negro regiments who were the nucleus of the army. Their solidarity against their rivals, the cavalry of the nobility, meant that the attempt of the uncles to impose a regent was defeated, and that the young *sulṭān* ruled in person from the beginning.¹ Yaṭṭūfat and Ḥammād, the brothers of Maṣṣūr, contented themselves with Tiaret and Ashīr. The rift in the family opened after Almanzor's son at Cordoba was appointed viceroy at Fez in 998. In 999, Zīrī b. 'Aṭīya returned to the attack upon Tiaret, defeating both Yaṭṭūfat and Ḥammād. As they fell back upon Ashīr, the six brothers of Buluggīn, the oldest generation of the Zirids, came out against their juniors.

Led by Abū 'l-Bahār, they allied on the one hand with Zīrī b. 'Aṭīya, and on the other with Fulful, son of Sa'īd b. Khazrūn, who had succeeded his father as governor of the Zab. The rebellion of Fulful kept Bādīs from advancing to the aid of Ḥammād, who remained on the defensive further to the west. The following year trouble broke out in the east when the Zirid governor of Tripoli fled to Egypt, and the new Fatimid Caliph Ḥākim seized the occasion to send the governor of Barce to take his place. In 1001, however, Zīrī b. 'Aṭīya died, leaving Ḥammād free to put down the revolt of his uncles, one of whom fled into Spain to become the lord of Granada. Bādīs drove Fulful from the Zab, while the governor of Barce was killed at Tripoli by Zirid troops. The victory in the west was the opportunity for a fresh settlement, a compromise. From 1005 Ḥammād, like his father Buluggīn before him, was entrusted with the whole of the central Maghrib under Zirid control. In 1008 he abandoned the westerly fortress of Ashīr for a new capital in the mountains to the north-east of Msila. Called the Qal'a – the castle – of the Banū Ḥammād, the city he founded was more strategically placed to command the Zab and the Kabyle mountains which were now the heart of his domain. It was populated by communities deported from Msila and from the old 'Alawī settlement of Sūq Ḥamza (Bouīra), the seat of a ruler who was the greatest of many such lords each with his castle and his men. The pattern was repeated by his enemies in the west. With the approval of Cordoba, the son of Ibn 'Aṭīya took possession of Fez as the Umayyad viceroy of all except Sijilmasa, where the Banū Khazrūn owed a separate allegiance. The Banū Ya'lā were installed at Tlemcen. This was the position when,

¹ Cf. Brett, 'Ifriqiya as a market', 354–5 and note 34; Brett, 'The military interest of the battle of Haydarān', in V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp, eds., *War, technology and society in the Middle East* (London, New York and Toronto, 1975), 78–88.

following the death of Almanzor in 1002, the second son of the great minister was murdered in 1009, and the Umayyad dominion fell apart. While Andalus was parcelled out among the so-called *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*, 'the kinglets', their counterparts in the Maghrib ruled from the borders of Tunisia to the Atlantic. There is little point in thinking of the intermittent conflict which continued between the Hammadids and their neighbours to the west as a struggle between two nations, 'Ṣanhāja' as opposed to 'Zanāta', still less between two ways of life, the sedentary as opposed to the nomadic.¹ It was the legacy of an imperial rivalry which had abolished the Rustamids and the Idrisids, the Kharijites and the old Shi'ites in that part of the world, and raised up a new generation of warriors to settle the quarrel in their own way.

Bādīs the *sultān*, monarch of Ifrīqiya with its central government, its regular income, its men of property and its loyal professional army which, when deployed, was the master of any battlefield, was prepared to acquiesce. Eastwards it was a different matter. Fleeing from the Zab, Fulful b. Sa'īd was welcomed at Tripoli after the governor of Barce had been killed. In 1002 he was joined by none other than Yaḥyā b. 'Alī b. Ḥamdūn, brother of Ja'far, the old rival of Buluggīn, who had been briefly installed at Basra in northern Morocco. He was sent now from Egypt by the Fatimid Caliph Ḥākim with an army drawn from the Banū Qurra, the Arabs of the western Delta, and an appointment as governor of Tripoli and Barce. Ḥākim's purpose is obscure; Yaḥyā's appointment was not necessarily an attempt to change the status quo in the way that 'Azīz may have hoped to alter the succession on the death of Buluggīn. It was perhaps the simple opportunism of a medieval ruler, for whom loyalty and treachery went hand in hand as the supreme instrument, however crude. In this case Yaḥyā retired when he was deserted by the Banū Qurra at the siege of Gabes in 1003, and Fulful was left in sole command. His independence at Tripoli was the first sign of something more profound, the end of the harmony created by Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah along the route to Egypt, which had been maintained for many years by the equitable division of Libya between the Zirids in the west and their suzerains in the east. At Alexandria, the Banū Qurra revolted, and were massacred. About 1005 they joined the Berber Lawāta in support of the first major pretender to rise against the Fatimids since Abū Yazid. This was Walid b. Hishām – an Umayyad name to indicate his claim to Umayyad descent – called 'Abū Rikwa', 'the man with a goatskin water-bottle', to mark his character as a vengeful

¹ E.-F. Gautier, *Le Passé de l'Afrique du Nord: les siècles obscurs* (Paris, 1952), 387-408.

preacher in the Fatimid tradition. Capturing Barce, he caused panic in Egypt when the Kutāma refused to fight against him. It was not until troops were brought from Syria that the rebel was driven to take refuge in Nubia, whence he was returned and put to death in 1007.

The Banū Qurra, however, remained restless. The revolt of Abū Rikwa was followed by a series of low Niles. In 1009 Ḥākim added to his difficulties with the famous destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, followed by a purge of the administration which drove the victims to conspire with the Arabs of Palestine. In 1010 Fulful b. Saʿīd died at Tripoli, and Bādīs himself marched upon the city to install one of his principal lieutenants, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan; the surviving chiefs of the Zanāta band were appointed governors in the Djerid. But in 1012, as Jerusalem was captured by the Arabs of Palestine, Mukhtār b. al-Qāṣim of the Banū Qurra seized Barce. The Zanāta chiefs rebelled in the Djerid, while a pretender – who may have been the son of Abū Rikwa – appeared among the Kutāma in their Ifriqiyan homeland. Cairo and Kairouan combined to defend their hegemony. Ḥākim, who had tried to place a Fatimid governor in Tripoli, now gave Barce to Bādīs. The expedient failed. Mukhtār b. al-Qāṣim recovered the city, and signalled the fact by waylaying the gifts sent by Bādīs to Cairo in 1014/15. Barce remained in his possession.

Ifriqiya, on the other hand, was overtaken by a crisis complicated by the controversy which marked the final phase of Ḥākim's reign, when prominence was given to the crucial but alarming doctrine that the Fatimid Imam was the incarnation of the Divine Spirit. In 1015 Bādīs ordered Ḥammād to relinquish the province of Constantine and the Kutāma country to Bādīs's son and heir, the infant Mu'izz. Ḥammād rebelled along with his brothers, and attacked Beja in the Medjerda valley inland from Tunis. He may have declared for Baghdad, and certainly the capture of Tunis is associated with a massacre of Ismā'ilites at Tunis. Ḥammād was driven back to the Qal'a by the weight of the *sulṭān's* army, which he was unable to face in the field, and was saved only by the death of Bādīs during the siege in 1016. The army, notably the '*abid*', procured the succession for Bādīs's son, the boy Mu'izz who had been left at Mahdiya. While the generals prepared for a second campaign in 1017, however, the Ismā'ilis were attacked and massacred in Kairouan and in cities as far away as Tripoli at the instigation of the Malikite '*ulamā'*'. The story is obscured by the dynastic tradition which would give the credit for the massacres to Mu'izz, but it should be seen

in the light of the claims put forward on Ḥākim's behalf, which at about the same time, or a year or two later, led to similar scenes in the Egyptian capital, when much of old Fustāt was burnt. At Kairouan, the riots could not be controlled, and the government was obliged to take its revenge in subsequent reprisals by the army.

Despite the riots, the reign of Mu'izz began well in the charge of a great lady, Umm Mallāl, the sister of Bādīs, who entrusted the education of the young prince to the secretary of the chancellery, Ibn Abī 'l-Rijāl, a native of Tiaret, known in the Latin West as Abenragel, the author of a treatise on astronomy. In 1017 Ḥammād was in fact soundly defeated, and the opportunity was taken to restore harmony. His independence was recognized, and the compact sealed by the marriage, in 1024, of his son 'Abd Allah to the sister of Mu'izz, Umm al-'Ulū. Only in the Djerid did the Zanāta remain troublesome, led by Khalifa b. Warrū, the nephew of Fulful. Their moment came with the destitution of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, who had been summoned from Tripoli on the death of Bādīs to take command of the central government for the royal family. In 1022 he was executed, like 'Abd Allah al-Kātib before him, on a charge of treason, of conspiring to obtain for himself the investiture of Cairo. At his fall, the brother whom he had left at Tripoli rebelled and invited Khalifa b. Warrū to enter the city. Khalifa was eventually confirmed in its possession. With Mukhtār b. al-Qāsim al-'Arabī at Barce, supported by the Banū Qurra in possession of the Buḥayra to the west of Alexandria, there were now two virtually independent principalities which controlled the route from Ifriqiya to Egypt. At least part of the explanation is the search for some permanent prize by captains created by the wars of the tenth century: immigrants into the Libyan area in the case of the Zanāta lords of the Banū Khazrūn; drawn from the beduin population in the case of the Arabs. The prizes in question were the two main cities along this stretch of coast, and part of the reward was a share in the profits of the trade which passed through them by land and sea.

The trade and the profits, however, were no longer as great as they had been in the previous generation. The removal of the Fatimids to Egypt had meant good business along the way from Kairouan, a boom in trade between the old and the new capital of the Fatimid empire, which no doubt helped to keep the peace for several decades as the peoples of Libya shared a common prosperity. By the beginning of the eleventh century, however, the attraction of Cairo meant that merchants were abandoning Kairouan, and that the volume of trade was falling.

From about this time there appeared at the Egyptian capital a community of immigrant Ifriqiyān Jews who consigned their papers to the cellar of their synagogue, the so-called Geniza (storehouse), lest they destroy the name of God which may have been written upon them, and thus ensured their survival. The arrival of these Jews at Cairo speaks for itself, but so does their curious archive, in which letters refer to the poor prospects for trade in Ifriqiyā about 1020, as well as to the obstacles created by the new rulers of Barce, who intercepted ships and caravans, levied tolls, and sold expropriated goods – undoubtedly with the connivance of the Fatimid authorities – in the Nile Valley. Dealings with Syria and Iraq, and the Red Sea trade to the Indies, seem more successful. The Jewish merchants traded for preference by sea, but their evidence is probably valid also for trade by land, as well as for trade conducted by Muslims.¹ It is likely that the trade of Libya was falling back to a more normal level, together with that of Ifriqiyā, from which the imperial government had departed. After the unusual prosperity of the period since 950, the adjustment was doubtless painful, and the political consequences considerable. It is probable that along the Libyan coast more and more people, from the *sulṭān* of Ifriqiyā through the upstart *amīrs* of Tripoli and Barce to the Caliph of Egypt, were trying to lay hands upon and participate in a diminishing commerce.

Ifriqiyā itself was affected. When Bādīs in 1015 forced shopkeepers to move from the main city to the *ṣūq* of Ṣabra, where rents were high (and presumably paid to the government), he may have been trying to protect his revenues against a fall in business. It is very likely that an economic grievance was at work in the riots against the Ismā'īlīs. In the provincial cities the underlying resentment was directed at Kairouan, and at the system which gave so much importance to the metropolis. Wherever they took place, attacks upon the Ismā'īlīs were attacks upon the regime and not far removed from a general attack upon the right of the Zirids to hold their power from the Fatimids, and to rule Ifriqiyā as they did. The criticism was not necessarily violent. The high society of the capital and the country was very close-knit, involving men of letters and learning as well as of wealth and power, who shared the same patrons, the same clients, the same education in the schools of Kairouan, and the same courtly venue in and around the palaces of the *sulṭān*. The general opinion was growing within this coterie

¹ Cf. Goitein, *A Mediterranean society*, 1, 30-2, 327-8, *et passim*; Goitein, *Studies in Islamic history and institutions* (Leiden, 1966), 308-28.

of predominantly Sunni conviction that the Fatimid connection was an embarrassment which might usefully be broken off. It is said that Ibn Abī 'l-Rijāl had provided his royal pupil with an education which brought him up as an orthodox Muslim with the intention of repudiating the suzerainty of Cairo. This is certainly too strong; nevertheless by the 1030s Mu'izz seems to have been consulting the leading jurists of Kairouan about the propriety of his position, and receiving the answer that it was inconsistent. If a formal break with Cairo was not a complete answer to the problems of the Zirid regime, it is likely that already Mu'izz had begun to see it as a hinge upon which a solution might turn.

Since the mysterious disappearance of Ḥākim outside Cairo in 1021, the Fatimid government had been in the hands of viziers acting on behalf of the palace. Three-quarters of a century earlier, the Byzantines had made peace with the Caliph Mu'izz li-Din Allah, conceding defeat in Sicily. In 1038, as part of a general treaty, the Fatimids recognized Byzantine ambitions in the island. Civil war had broken out between members of the Kalbid dynasty. Ifriqiyan piracy and seafaring had revived, and in 1036 the Zirids had intervened on the island in an attempt to impose a Zirid ruler. The attempt failed when the east of the island was invaded by the Byzantine general, George Maniaces, who remained until his death in 1043. Frustrated in what appeared to be a promising venture, Mu'izz was faced with a worsening situation to the south. In 1026 Cairo had confirmed Khalifa b. Warrū in power at Tripoli with an undertaking to secure the caravan routes. But although presents were exchanged by Khalifa and Mu'izz, it may be that the dynasty of the Banū Khazrūn had a hand in the raids which brought the Zanāta of the Djerid close to the Ifriqiyan capital. There was fighting also between Zirid forces and the Ibadite peoples of the region, giving Mu'izz a bad name in Ibadite tradition. The erstwhile concord had turned to growing enmity. It only remained for the killing of Khalifa's successor, Sa'id b. Khazrūn, at Tripoli in 1038, to signal the arrival of yet more immigrants into the troubled area, in this case the Zughba, one of the tribes of the Banū Hilāl, now moving westward from their tenth-century location by al-Wāḥāt, the oases of Egypt.¹

The killing of Sa'id by the Zughba did not prevent the succession of his brother Muntaṣir and the continuation of the dynasty. The new ruler took the opportunity to expel from the city the jurist Ibn al-

¹ See M. Brett, 'The Zughba at Tripoli, 429H (1037-8 AD)', *Society for Libyan Studies, ixth annual report, 1974-5*, 41-7.

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Munammar, who twenty years previously had directed the massacre of the Ismā'ilis at Tripoli, and had remained a political figure. It may have been Ibn al-Munammar who had already brought about a breach with Cairo, attested by a dinar of 1033/4 struck at Tripoli with a Sunni inscription. He was expelled because he had opened the gates to a cousin who was promptly ousted by Muntaṣir, but the episode is significant of the tension which continued to exist between rulers and the more fanatical men of religion. The lesson was not lost on Mu'izz, that the profession of orthodox Islam might give him the authority he required to deal with such men, preachers capable of arousing the mob against a Shi'ite government. The tribes of the Banū Hilāl were another matter. As immigrants into the area, they had turned away from the pastoral routine described by Ibn Ḥawqal to something more war-like. They were a threat but also a promise. As warriors, they were probably employed by the descendants of Khazrūn at Tripoli in much the same way, perhaps, as their relatives the Banū Qurra were associated with the ruler of Barce. Further west, Mu'izz was increasingly obliged by the hostility of the Ibadite peoples of the Djerid and the Jebel Nefusa to provide for the safety of the route along the coastal plain from Tripoli to Gabes. In 1045/6 he defeated the Lawāta of the Jebel Nefusa, and it may have been then that he set the Hilālī tribes of Riyāḥ and Zughba in this narrow strip between the hills and the sea. Their employment as aliens, who were hostile to the original inhabitants, to secure this vital line was a critical decision by Mu'izz. It was an essential part of a much grander design upon the Libyan coast.

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In 1048 Mu'izz took the decisive step of denouncing the Fatimids and recognizing the 'Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. It was a time when the Buwayhids were weakening at the approach of the Seljūq Turks from the north-east, and the 'Abbasid caliph was encouraged to seek diplomatic recognition from the princes of the Muslim world. For his part, Mu'izz acted deliberately to place himself at the head of a nation of true believers, in a position to deal with his opponents and to go forward to the creation of a new empire. The change of allegiance was systematically

¹ This section is based upon my unpublished Ph.D. thesis, M. Brett, 'Fitnat al-Qayrawān' (University of London, 1970); cf. also Brett, 'Ifriqiya as a market', 'The Zughba at Tripoli', 'The military interest of the battle of Ḥaydarān'; and Brett, 'Sijill al-Mustaṣir', paper presented to the Premier Congrès d'Histoire et de Civilisation du Maghreb, Tunis, Dec. 1974, to be published in the *Actes du Congrès*.

celebrated in standard fashion. The *khuṭba*, the address at the Friday prayer, was in the name of Baghdad; a new gold coinage was issued; and the titles used in diplomatic correspondence were altered. The Fatimid colour white was changed for the 'Abbasid colour black; perhaps by a deliberate play upon these symbols, Mu'izz was hailed as the one who had turned night into day. He laid particular claim to the genealogy by which he was descended from the old Arab kings of Himyar in the Yemen. These, it was said, had been forced to emigrate with their people from the city of Ma'rib by the breaking of the great dam which had irrigated their land in the days before Islam, and had therefore come to North Africa long before the upstart Fatimids were heard of. Presents were made to Muntaṣir b. Khazrūn at Tripoli, who may have come in person to offer his allegiance. In 1051-2, Jabbāra b. Mukhtār al-'Arabī at Barce burnt the insignia of the Fatimids, cursed them from the pulpits and announced his obedience to Mu'izz in the name of Baghdad. Cairo could make no effective reply. Al-Yāzūrī, who became vizier and head of the Egyptian government on behalf of the young caliph Mustanṣir on 1 June 1050, had no other weapon than vituperation. His only satisfaction was the flight of the *qāḍī* of Šabra to Egypt, and the interception of an ambassador bearing insignia from Baghdad to Kairouan in 1051. The ambassador was publicly humiliated. He had been apprehended in the first instance by the Byzantines, who handed him over partly, it would seem, because of Zirid piracy in southern Italy. It is not unlikely that Mu'izz hoped that Sicily would at last fall into his hands.

Yet Mu'izz was not entirely happy, as the way in which he asserted his new authority makes clear. The issue of a new coinage, although it was metallically sound, caused a panic hoarding. In 1049/50 the administration was purged of the nominees of a great military officer, 'Abbād, who had probably been head of government. In the following year, the *sulṭān* expelled from Kairouan the popular preacher Ibn 'Abd al-Šamad, to have him assassinated, most probably by the Hilālī Arabs, on his way from Gabes to Tripoli; there were many who accused Mu'izz of the murder. More important, by 1051 there was trouble with the Riyāḥ and Zughba. These Hilālī tribes were dissatisfied with their agreement with the *sulṭān*, perhaps because it confined them to a fairly barren region. When negotiation finally failed, they advanced beyond the strategically situated fortress city of Gabes to enter the somewhat more fertile lands to the north. Thus challenged, in the spring of 1052 Mu'izz himself prepared to lead what was probably an annual expedition to the south

to collect the taxes and impose the peace. As a test of their loyalty, the Riyāḥ and Zughba may have been summoned to attend the muster, drawing them towards Kairouan. Instead of submitting, however, they surprised the *sulṭān* and his army on the march in rough country perhaps 50 km from the capital. When the Arabs charged on horses, which Mu'izz may well have given them to improve their fighting power, the cavalry of the Zirid aristocracy fled, leaving the 'abid to take the weight of the attack. Mu'izz was saved by the discipline of these infantrymen, and retreated under their escort to Šabra, but his camp was plundered of all it contained by way of treasure and equipment and pack-animals. Kairouan was besieged. While Mu'izz concentrated the remnant of his army in Šabra, and supervised the hasty erection of walls and barricades around the main city, the Arabs roamed the countryside, plundering and taking prisoners.

All was not lost. For a year after this, the battle of Ḥaydarān, Mu'izz was engaged in bargaining with the tribes, who seem to have demanded *iqṭā'āt*, concessions of land where they could live as masters, no more perhaps than they had enjoyed when they first entered the service of the *sulṭān*, but in more favourable districts. After a period of two hundred and fifty years, during which time the rulers of Ifriqiya had thought it prudent to keep Kairouan defenceless, the city was provided with an enceinte. The rest of the country waited on events. Then the Riyāḥ and the Zughba quarrelled over the booty they had taken at Ḥaydarān, and appealed to the vizier al-Yāzūrī in Egypt, who saw a great opportunity. In 1053-4 he sent an ambassador, Amīn al-Dawla Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Mulhim, as far as Gabes. Ibn Mulhim adjudicated the dispute, urged the tribes under the leadership of Mu'nis b. Yaḥyā to return to the siege of Kairouan, and proclaimed the return of Fatimid suzerainty. Mu'izz was abandoned by important members of the Zirid dynasty and the Zirid aristocracy, who came to Gabes to offer their submission. One was appointed governor of the city. If the claim of Cairo that the whole of Ifriqiya had returned to obedience was exaggerated, it was perhaps no coincidence that during the same year Sousse revolted. As the Egyptian envoy returned in triumph with his share of the loot of Ḥaydarān, Mu'izz prepared to leave Kairouan for Mahdiya. His son Tamīm was installed there as governor, and the transfer of treasure began. With the writing on the wall, the population of the old metropolis began to emigrate, and the poets to lament. The theme of descent from the legendary kings of Himyar took on a fresh meaning. Kairouan was compared to the old city of Ma'rib, which had

likewise been abandoned by its inhabitants. In 1057 Mu'izz departed. In 1058 he acknowledged once again his allegiance to the Fatimids, and in 1062 he died.

It was the end of an era. Ifriqiya, the Byzantine province which the Arabs had inherited, had dissolved into its component parts. The central government was not defeated so much as deserted. Kairouan, the old metropolis, shrank to a fraction of its former size. Tunis, Sfax, Gabes, and Gafsa in the Djerid were all independent. The Zirids were confined to Mahdiya and Sousse; only after many years did Tamim, Mu'izz's son and successor, manage to extend his authority in the Sahel. It only remained to offer an explanation. Already before the emigration of Mu'izz to Mahdiya, the legend of Ma'rib had given the answer. Like the land of Himyar, Ifriqiya had been devastated by a flood, not of water but of men, the Banū Hilāl. The Arab tribes were a convenient scapegoat. When Mu'izz returned to the Fatimid fold, the metaphor attained the status of myth. In that year, 1058, the Fatimid vizier al-Yāzūrī, who had directed the Egyptian intervention in the affairs of Ifriqiya, and had boasted extravagantly of his responsibility for the downfall of the Zirid *sulṭān*, was disgraced and put to death. As the two dynasties were reconciled in accordance with the fiction of the divine harmony which prevailed throughout the dominions of the Fatimid Imam, it was possible to say of the fallen minister that he had been the insignificant cause of a great natural disaster, comparable to the breaking of the Ma'rib dam, an act of God for which no one, least of all the two sovereigns, could really be held to blame. With this judgement upon them, the Banū Hilāl, who had helped to extend into Ifriqiya proper the political fragmentation into smaller, independent principalities which had begun in the Libyan area at the beginning of the eleventh century, passed into history as the great destroyers – Ibn Khaldūn's swarm of locusts who had devastated the land and left it permanently waste.

10. THE FATIMID REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA

papers read at these conferences – Essen (Dinkler, 1970), Warsaw (Michalowski, 1975) – gives the most up-to-date information on many topics. Papers from the Chantilly conference are expected to be published in 1977.

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The references are essentially those for chapter 8, 'The Arab conquest and the expansion of Islam in North Africa'. Useful articles will be found in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st and 2nd edns, under, e.g., Abū Yazīd, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, Fāṭimids, Ẹarṣaṭiyya, Muḥammad b. Tughj. The fullest source for the Ikhshidids is Ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-maghrib fi ḥulā' l-Maghrib*, Bk iv, ed. and trans. into German by K. L. Tallqvist (1899), which is derived from the work of the contemporary Ibn Zūlāq; Tallqvist's edition includes the relevant section of al-Kindi's work, with a translation, for comparison. A certain amount of information on the administration in this early period is to be found in Rabie, *The financial system of Egypt*, AH 564–741/AD 1169–1341 (1972).

The history of the Fatimids in the Maghrib has not yet become the subject of a monograph. The sources for the Fatimid and Zīrid period down to 1062 for the most part go back to the lost chronicles of al-Raḡiq and his continuator Ibn Sharaf, variously represented in the *Bayān* of Ibn 'Idhārī, the *Kitāb al-Kāmil* of Ibn al-Athīr, and the *Kitāb al-Ibar* of Ibn Khaldūn (for details see bibliographical essay for chapter 8). To these may be added the geographers, al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, *Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum*, ed. by de Goeje, vii (1892); Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, ed. by Kramers (1938–9), French trans. by Kramers and Wiet, *Configuration de la terre* (1964); and al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, ed. and trans. by de Slane (1911–13, reprinted 1965). The principal secondary work following upon Talbi, *L'Émirat Aglabide* (1966), is Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zīrides*, 2 vols. (1962). For the economic history of the subject, cf. Brett, 'Ifriqiya as a market for Saharan trade, from the tenth to the twelfth century AD' (1969). The account of the eleventh century is based essentially upon Brett's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'Fitnat al-Qayrawān' (1970); cf. Brett, 'The Zughba at Tripoli, 429H (1037–8 AD)' (1974–5); 'The military interest of the battle of Ḥaydarān', in Parry and Yapp (1975); 'Sijill al-Mustanşir' (1974). The account of the Geniza material is contained in Goitein, *A Mediterranean society*, 1 (1967).

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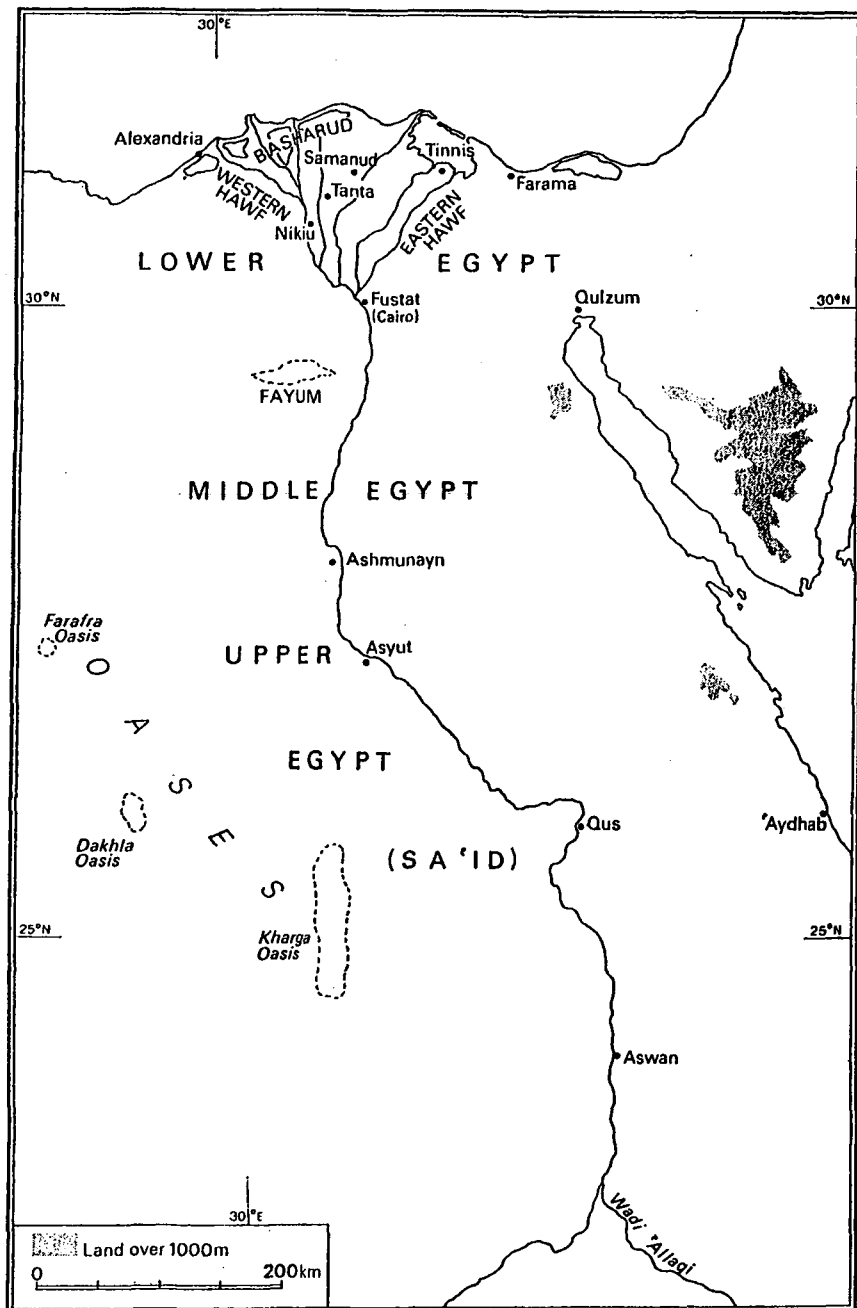
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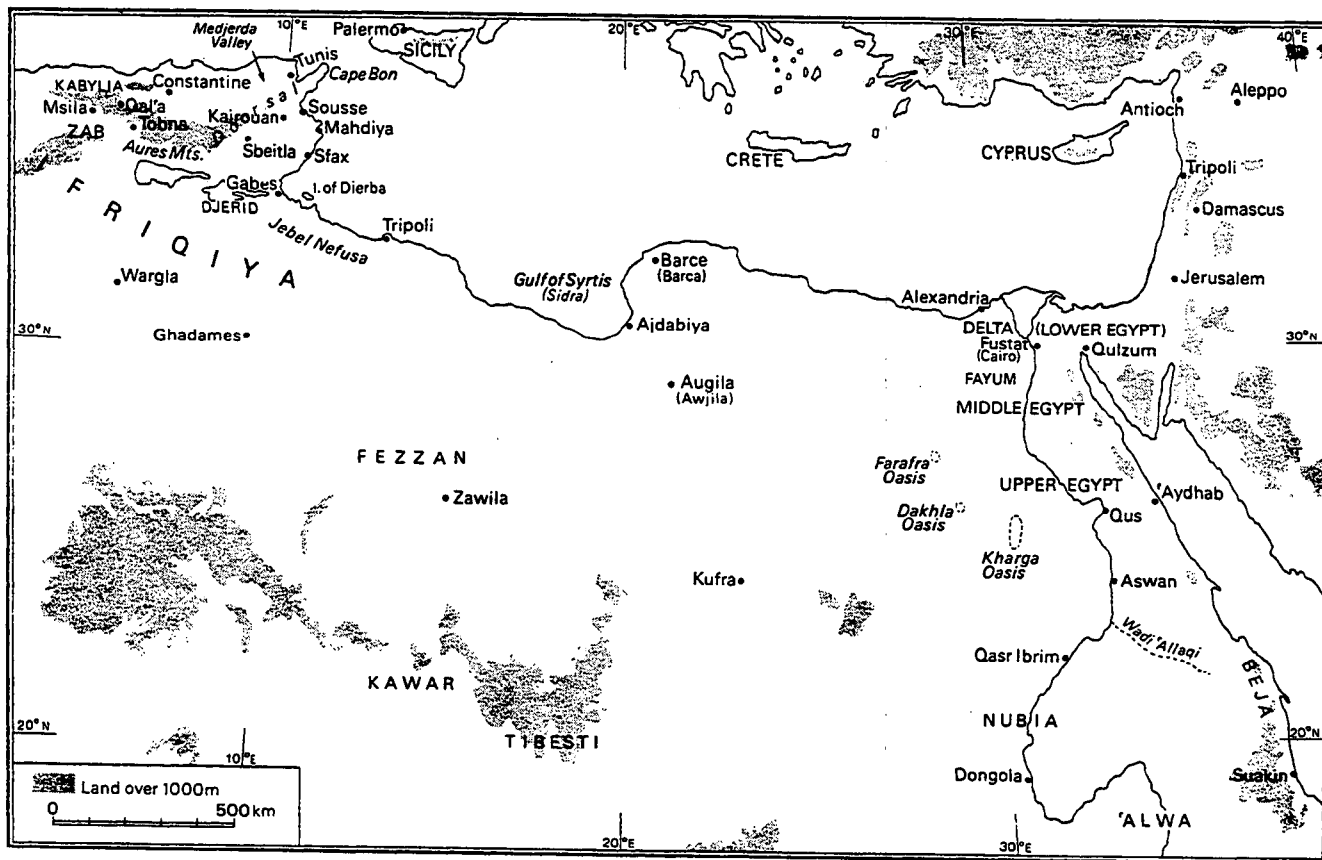
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ARAB CONQUEST AND RISE OF ISLAM IN NORTH AFRICA



62 Egypt, from the seventh to the ninth centuries.



63 Egypt, Nubia and Ifriqiya, from the seventh to the ninth centuries.

